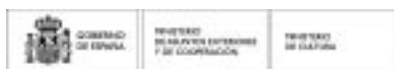


**10,000 FRANCS REWARD  
(THE CONTEMPORARY ART  
MUSEUM, DEAD OR ALIVE)**

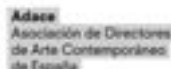
**What is the museum's role? What should be its functions and activities in today's society? What other operational and organizational models could be proposed to help overcome the modernist position by which the museum, as a repository of artistic essences, can make a universal reality visible in an immanent way? To debate these questions, the Association of Contemporary Art Directors of Spain – ADACE – constituted as a forum for reflection and debate, held in Baeza a conference in which those responsible for Spain's museums reflected, together with their foreign colleagues, as well as artists and thinkers, on these matters in an idea-sharing session. The results of this meeting are published in this book which brings together interventions by Manuel Asensi, Mieke Bal, John Beverley, Manuel Borja-Villel, Benjamim Buchloh, Gustavo Buntinx, Jean-François Chevrier, Nuria Enguita Mayo, Javier González de Durana, Beatriz Herráez, Paulo Herkenhoff, Martin Jay, Ana Longoni, Ute Meta Bauer, Simón Marchán, Antoni Muntadas, Juan de Nieves, Martha Rosler, Suelly Rolnik, Yolanda Romero, René Schérer, Allan Sekula, Teresa Velázquez and Santos Zunzunegui.**



# 10,000 FRANCS REWARD (THE CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM, DEAD OR ALIVE)



Sociedad Estatal  
para la Acción  
Cultural Exterior







MINISTERIO DE CULTURA



Sociedad Estatal  
para la Acción  
Cultural Exterior



Edition:

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Subdirección General de Publicaciones,  
Información y Documentación
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Éditions L'Arachnéen, [www.editions-arachneen.fr](http://www.editions-arachneen.fr) (pp. 95, 96, 98), Marc Pataut (pp. 104, 105)
- NIPO: 551-08-134-8  
ISBN 978-84-7993-074-5  
ISBN 978-84-96933-30-9 (SEACEX)  
Legal Deposit: B-xxxxx-2009  
Printing: Ingoprint S.A.



Contemporary art is in a particularly healthy state in Spain. Evidence of this lies in the emergence in the last few years of an important number of art museums and centres which, besides being able to connect with the general public, have helped set in motion collaborative networks of great importance within the sector.

In this regard, the creation in 2004 of the Association of Contemporary Art Directors of Spain (Asociación de Directores de Arte Contemporáneo de España, ADACE), was a crucial step. The meetings in Baeza, the fruits of which are compiled in this publication, are the result of the collaboration of this association of art institution directors from all over Spain with Central Government –represented by the Ministry of Culture and the State Corporation for Spanish Cultural Action Abroad– and the International University of Andalusia.

Likewise, the Baeza meetings exemplify the need to unite our finest professionals in the contemporary art world with their international colleagues with regards to defining the role of our current society's art criticism and contemporary art centres.

I am honoured to present the results of these Baeza meetings and continue working alongside the ADACE. Related to this, in 2008 a great meeting of Ibero-American art centres has been organized, in which, once again, the international language of contemporary art will act as a way to bring together those of us committed to creativity and that common experience, aesthetics, which so helps to define us as human beings.

**César Antonio Molina**  
Minister of Culture

Ever since it made its appearance towards the end of the 18th century, the museum as public institution has gradually renovated its goals and its own image. Without abandoning the social purpose, which has its roots in the Enlightenment, that turned it into an indispensable instrument for culture, the widening of this institution, in our modern mass and consumer society, necessitates a re-definition of spaces, institutional mechanisms and communication routes. These challenges are even greater, if possible, when attempting to display a contemporary artwork in permanent transformation and whose size – in limits, character and even sense – serves as material for an open debate that is inseparable from all cultural genres, ever larger and more open to technology and communication. Thus the need to channel the dialogue of the experts with the rest of society, as stated during these conference sessions held in Baeza. The historic Andalusia Renaissance town serves as a setting for an event that is absolutely up to date, and is indispensable to face the future of a cultural area, that of contemporary art museums, which in Spain is one of the most dynamic settings in recent years, thanks to the decisive commitment of the most diverse public and private institutions.

Dialogue between technicians and heads of various Spanish museums and those of other countries is an attempt to go in depth into the rigour, collaboration and in sum, progress of reflection on modern museums. Thus the full sense of participation in the organisation of these conference events of the State Corporation for Spanish Cultural Action Abroad (SEACEX), which has as its fundamental target the propagation of all facets, past and present, of Spanish culture in the rest of the world. With this in mind, we have been carrying out a wide programme of activities in all continents in which an outstanding feature is that of monographic and collective exhibits of contemporary Spanish artists, as well as, in a very special way, the collaboration with other institutions that we will attempt to back in order to make current Spanish artistic vitality known to as wide a public as possible.

An organisation for management and cultural dissemination such as SEACEX, which attempts to render service to the whole of society, going beyond national frontiers, constitutes an instrument that is especially valuable to facilitate, or in some cases promote, all sorts of cultural projects backed by scientific rigour or aesthetic quality. This instrument is inseparable from the work done by specialists and institutions such as those that are gathered in these sessions, whose work we attempt to make as approachable as possible, and in accordance with the special sensibility of culture in the widest sense of the term that the Spanish Government wishes to impress on all the activities it carries out.



At a time when art opens out unceasingly to the most diverse horizons, breaking down barriers in style and tradition, genre and base, we propose – with special attention to the youngest creators – also to collect the multiple requirements of art of our times, backing all means of expression which are other ways of understanding reality or contributing to transform it within and beyond the walls of museums, museums which are ever more linked to the city and the territory they are lodged in. For all these reasons, SEACEX could not do other than back this museum forum, whose international repercussions attempt to help fulfil the goals that constitute its reason for existing.

**Charo Otegui**

President of the State Corporation for Spanish Cultural  
Action Abroad, SEACEX



The International University of Andalusia (UNIA) was established with the goal of contributing to the creation, development, transmission and critique of science, techniques and culture by means of teaching, co-ordinated research and the exchange of relevant scientific and technological information on an international and inter-regional level. Set within the framework of the Andalusian University System, it stands out because of its open nature, geared to post-graduate education and with a commitment to the society it forms part of, yet at the same time, it also stands out because of a clear vocation of solidarity and co-operation, especially with Latin America and the Maghreb.

The UNIA, precisely because of its specific nature, is a flexible institution capable of adapting to the needs of new training and research processes in current society. In this sense, it is also the home of the project UNIA artandthinking, which has as its goals incorporating university institutions into debates, production and propagation of considerations associated to certain matters of art critique and contemporary culture; with the understanding that its initiatives and programmes are not only a way to complete the academic offerings of the International University of Andalusia, but also above all as a way of relating the university with the cultural and social milieu, in such a way that society grows ever more interwoven, thus producing projects that are generative, cross-curricular, inter-disciplinary and trans-national related to thought, art and contemporary action, so enabling the development of a culture of process, of trajectory, of dialogue, so that art and thought receive value within social relations.

When the people responsible for this encounter invited us to participate in the organisation of these work sessions on the role of museums in contemporary art, it is easy to see how we accepted without hesitating, due to the importance of the content that we publish here and their scope in the future. The celebration of *10,000 francs reward (The Contemporary Art Museum, dead or alive)* a gathering of local and international experts in the halls of our headquarters in Baeza, in the place where the poet Antonio Machado was born, makes more obvious, if possible, our firm resolve to be a universal university that is committed to both large and small matters of our times. I would like to thank the Ministry of Culture, SEACEX and ADACE for enabling these workshops to take place by counting on the International University of Andalusia for the organisation in our headquarters in Baeza, where, according to popular wisdom, among its streets and noble architecture and surrounding olive groves, the soul of Antonio Machado still wanders.

**Juan Manuel Suárez Japón**

Rector of the International University of Andalusia



<b>Presentation</b> Yolanda Romero	12
<b>10,000 francs reward</b> <b>(The Contemporary Art Museum,</b> <b>dead or alive)</b> Manuel Borja-Villel	14
<b>The Museum as a Space</b> <b>for Regeneration</b> Lecture: Benjamin Buchloh Other participants: Simón Marchán Fiz and Santos Zunzunegui Moderation: Manuel Borja-Villel	18
<b>Between the artistic fact</b> <b>and the document: the translation</b> Lecture: Martin Jay Other participants: Jean-François Chevrier, Antoni Muntadas and Suely Rolnik Moderation: Nuria Enguita Mayo	51
<b>What history are we telling?</b> <b>How are narrations built?</b> Lecture: Mieke Bal Other participants: Beatriz Herráez and Allan Sekula Moderation: Javier González de Durana	120
<b>The subaltern voice: Latin America</b> Lecture: John Beverley Other participants: Gustavo Buntinx, Paulo Herkenhoff and Ana Longoni Moderation: Teresa Velázquez	144
<b>Towards a Perverted Pedagogy</b> Lecture: René Schérer Other participants: Manuel Asensi, Ute Meta Bauer and Martha Rosler Moderation: Juan de Nieves	207
<b>Profiles</b>	239

10,000 FRANCS REWARD  
(THE CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM,  
DEAD OR ALIVE)  
MANUEL BORJA-VILLEL

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1. In a society like our own, in which the difference between production and reproduction is shrinking and the typical post-fordist player performs mental or symbolic tasks, art and the museum as a privileged setting in which this player operates have acquired a heretofore unknown centrality. It is therefore not surprising that literature on museums is abundant and that conferences and symposiums are constantly held to discuss its limits and functions.

*10,000 Francs Reward* is the title of an interview granted by Marcel Broodthaers to Irmeline Lebeer in 1974. In it the Belgian artist criticised the fact that art was a prisoner of its own ghosts, decorating the walls of institutions as a symbol of power and wandering like a shadow through the nooks and crannies of history. Clearly, Broodthaers was distancing himself from the modern stance according to which the museum, as a repository of artistic essences, needed to make immediately visible a universal reality that would transform society. Over thirty years later, the questions and doubts raised by Broodthaers about the modern museum are not only valid, but in most cases remain unresolved.

Arising in the 1960s as a manner of securing art a place in the discursive network through which the dominant social groups exercise their power, institutional criticism has not always understood the new circumstances in which the society of *general intellect* and cognitive work has subsumed the fact of art. A great many of the studies and analyses that are conducted on the museum are thus melancholic, nostalgic even, in nature. They fail to recognise that the museum is structured around a discourse that naturally entails narrations (the stories we tell or show through a series of works, events or documents), but also the audiences who adopt these narrations, questioning them, in accordance with display elements located between the former and the latter.

If we had to describe a museum visually, it would be represented by an equilateral triangle whose first tip would indicate the narrations, the second the intermediation structures, and the third the audience. There are abundant studies and theories on narrations and display elements. However, a convincing theory has yet to be put forward on audiences and education. This is possibly the reason for the pessimism of some essays that have appeared recently. Artists' proposals and exhibition formats are analysed, but nothing of the sort that constitutes pragmatics of the museum itself. The museum today is a place that generates new modes of sociability. If we do not want it to be a place of control and exclusion but rather, on the contrary, a democratic space, it is essential for its laws to be shared by all those who frequent it. There is thus an urgent need to move from a modern archaeology of knowledge to a post-modern praxis – that is, to realise what the museum consists of as a discursive phenomenon in its own right, what its place is in the age we live in and what models of resistance it can provide us with.

2. With a not inconsiderable dose of humour, we called this meeting a “summit”. We were attempting to be ironic about the political and economic summits in which prominent people of all kinds claim to speak on behalf of humanity, when in fact they are moved by very specific interests. It was not our intention to pontificate about certain issues but quite the opposite. We were seeking a space for questioning, which is always partial and fragmentary. Questioning is the act of speaking that enables outsiders to our discursive setup to do so, that is, those who are not part of our system of intelligibility. It is also the moment of a certain exteriority, of an otherness, different from the institutional community that defends its interests. As questioning always entails acting from outside, it is by definition the opposite of consensus. That is why the debate between speakers and audience was very important and both were drawn from very different sectors of the cultural sphere.

We cannot forget that we are living in an age in which everything seems to be valid and jumbled ideas are the norm. The general trend is leading us towards a sort of low-intensity eclecticism that is claimed to be a manner of safeguarding a supposed democratisation of culture. It is precisely now that what Max Weber called substantive rationality is becoming more relevant than ever. We are living in a period of systematic crisis and it is therefore our duty to point out certain paths as opposed to others. This choice cannot be technical or dictated by a formal rationality but rather by the rationality involved in reconciling what we learn from science and morality; and it always signifies an ethical choice. Particular attendees and speakers, as opposed to others, took part in these debate meetings. Their work and track record point in a specific direction. It was not, then, an eclectic choice. Nor was it attempted to represent that which is fashionable in the art world. Authors whose ideas allowed us to analyse the museum as a discursive practice and its position nowadays were invited to take part in the debate.

3. Five study tables were organised. In the first we put to the speakers the possibility of regarding the museum as a space for social regeneration as a basis for imagining new forms of sociability. Above and beyond Huntington's clash of civilisations, it is very possible that we are currently witnessing the close of a period of history and that this period will end up as a worldwide conflict or, at the last, the overall weakening of

democracy. Recent political events, fundamentalist movements of all kinds and the sort of self-imposed authoritarianism into which Western democratic models appear to be degenerating would seem to indicate this. In this connection it is appropriate to think that, as in the neo-realist period in Europe of the 1940s, art and the museum may acquire a capital role in regeneration, in re-establishing new areas of freedom.

Benjamin Buchloh's paper referred precisely to the disappearance from society of spectacle, and of the consumption of this public sphere propitiated by the bourgeoisie with the intention of it becoming a place for criticism and for contesting power relations. Simón Marchán Fiz, on the one hand, and Santos Zunzunegui, on the other, put forward two positions as a solution to this crisis. Whereas in Simón Marchán's view, in order to recover its critical position the museum should stick to its modern parameters and not take in works from a broader field, Santos Zunzunegui considers that it is precisely the cinema that can prevent the museum being absorbed by the market and enable it to create margins of resistance.

The second and third tables are intrinsically linked. As a result of its idealist origins, modernity understood there to be no division between thought and speech, and it failed to take into account the linguistic nature of the museum. It was taken for granted that artworks transmitted their contents in an immanent manner. We know that this is not so, and we therefore need to reconsider the way in which we tell the story, what the narrator's role is in it, the documentary nature of any work and the compatibility between document and fact of art. The first roundtable questioned the possibility of finding fictional devices, new tales to be told. The second discussed the need for a narrativity that is not necessary literal. In view of Martin Jay's radical criticism of the predominance of the visual in the culture of modernity in his book *Downcast eyes*, and Mieke Bal's studies on narratology, they were asked to head the discussions. Suely Rolnik, Muntadas and Jean-François Chevrier, on the one hand, and Beatriz Herráez and Allan Sekula, on the other, contributed diverse viewpoints. With the fourth group we wished to deal with another fundamental aspect of today: the subaltern voice. How can we give a voice to those who lack one? How can we generate areas that make disagreement possible? If the modern museum model is a thing of the past and if it stemmed from a hegemonic dictate that despised the existence of the other as uncultured or backward, the urgent need for this other to be visible is obvious, especially in a world in which frontiers have disappeared. However, when the dominant discourse is multiculturalism, and the political culture is that of the politically correct, we tend to imagine an artistic setup in which the other can speak to us, when this in fact is not the case; and, ultimately, we tend to quell any kind of difference and antagonism. The need to understand subalternity is fundamental if we do not wish art as an institution to turn into a sort of republic of letters and artists into our national patriarchs.

The choice of Latin America was not a matter of chance. At no point was it intended to establish a table of "marginals" (John Beverley, Ana Longoni, Paulo Herkenhoff and Gustavo Buntinx are not at all marginal), a ghetto; rather, by bringing these voices together we wished to draw attention to the fact that the questioner does not exist without the questioned, and that nor can we speak of Latin America without speaking of ourselves. The same notion of Latin America as a unity would merely perpetuate that idea of the excluded other, lacking in complexity.



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Finally, it is essential to address our interrelation structures. Who are the museum's audience? What access do they have to culture? Pedagogy is precisely the aspect that is closely linked to the audience and is still not considered an element of liberation. Most teaching programmes promote inequality and hinder true access to knowledge. We cannot fail to acknowledge the good intentions of the museum institution, which devotes considerable effort and resources to "bringing art closer" to its audience, in order to disseminate the treasures it holds. These reformist measures have done nothing but perpetuate some of the fallacies on which modern pedagogy rests, such as transparency, progress, education as mere transmission and access. How can a museum explain the history, the memory/memories of which it is a repository? Evidently, education and narration are inseparable. It is not possible to develop an alternative education policy without the story/stories that are told being alternative too. Taking up some of the proposals of the French thinker René Schérer, Manuel Asensi, Martha Rosler and Ute Meta Bauer attempted to provide an answer from different perspectives.

**PRESENTATION**  
**YOLANDA ROMERO**  
President of ADACE

---

The Association of Contemporary Art Directors of Spain (ADACE) was created over two years ago, and today includes directors of about twenty museums and contemporary art centres in Spain, many of whom are with us here today. Ever since our foundation, we have made ourselves known through diverse communiqués and public interventions requesting the modernisation of the structures and rules governing our museum institutions, as in the end these institutions must guarantee managing museums, and producing them as a public service. Many of you may be surprised to know that these requests have not gone far beyond asking various administrations that art centres receive financial aid and enough staff for them to operate correctly from their initial stages of creation; that cultural institutions should not be subject to the to and fro of politics; that the choice of their directors should be made through regulated procedures that are transparent and competitive; that museums and art centres should have necessary self-rule and stability to carry out their plans; that it is not good for them to be subject to the tyranny of visitor statistics, or that the structure of their sponsorships should be carried out under criteria of professionalism and independence, among other things.

In summary, we have wished to call attention to the need to solve those matters that support the full efficiency of our museums and art centres. However, denouncement is not the only goal of our association, as ADACE does not wish to play a merely reactive role in view of certain events in the cultural life of our country, but rather we are working to build a forum for reflection, a space for opinion in which we can debate in a constructive way and with professionals of other disciplines, museums and contemporary art centres: their functions and goals, their methods and work instruments, their independence and self-rule in planning the activities they carry out, their sources of financing, etc: these are some of the subjects to be debated.

In short, ADACE has been created to have a collective voice that can make itself heard in matters which, because they belong to the public side of the arts and their services,

can be of general interest. In our opinion, *10,000 francs reward* is precisely that. It is a platform for debate that attempts to generate a space for opinion and the exchange of ideas on what role is played by a museum, and what its future is. With this idea we started working almost a year ago with the idea of celebrating an international encounter in which the members of our association, in touch with other professionals in the field of contemporary art (thinkers, artists, commissioners) could activate a forum for discussion, analysis and critical debate. However, we don't wish to be an isolated event, and for this reason we want *10,000 francs* to be the start of a long-lasting initiative that will be biennial at least, as the relationship structures are built up with time, and on a long-term basis.

Within the sector of contemporary art, the need to establish international working networks that can contribute to better awareness of Spanish art beyond our boundaries is a unanimous opinion. Undoubtedly this type of encounter enables closer relationships between professionals, this type of event contributes to making them more fluid and stable. The same structure of operation of this summit, in which, along with almost twenty first-rate speakers, we have in attendance almost one hundred museum experts, commissioners, artists and museum directors, will be very stimulating in this sense.

On behalf of ADACE, I wish to thank you all. We are grateful to the speakers who have made the effort to be here in spite of their busy agendas, enabling us to share in their knowledge; to the participants, because of the interest shown in this project; to the institutions, for not backing just a grand event, but rather a more fragile-looking event, yet more necessary and long-lasting, as this space for thinking is. To all in conclusion for their contributions, reflections and ideas, and especially Carlos Alberdi, Maribel Serrano and Juan Manuel Suárez Japón, who have backed this encounter from the very start and have believed in the need for it to take place.

Yet I would not like to finish without making a brief mention of the poet who gives his name to these headquarters of the UNIA in Baeza, Antonio Machado. In 1936 at the dawn of the Spanish Civil War, Machado published a book in prose, *Juan de Mairena. Sentencias, donaires, apuntes y recuerdos de un profesor apócrifo*, and in its pages he talks about society, culture, art, literature, poetry, politics and also includes his ideas about teaching. For Machado there is no trade more noble than that of teaching. Juan de Mairena, the heteronymous name favoured by Machado, understands that teaching is not indoctrination, but rather mental gymnastics with the students, helping them to limber up the grey matter immersed in slander or negligence. 'You know,' Mairena tells his disciples, 'that I am not attempting to teach you anything, and I am only dedicated to shaking up the inertia of your souls, to plough the stubborn fallow land of your thoughts, to plant inquisitiveness, as has been very reasonably said, and I would say rather, to plant concern and discernment.'

Thank you very much, and welcome.

## THE MUSEUM AS A SPACE FOR REGENERATION

MAIN SPEAKER: BENJAMIN BUCHLOH

OTHER PARTICIPANTS: SIMÓN MARCHÁN FIZ  
AND SANTOS ZUNZUNEGUI

MODERATOR: MANUEL BORJA-VILLEL

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**Manuel Borja-Villel** We start off this first day with Benjamin Buchloh's address. Benjamin is well known to all of us: his work in *Interfunktionen*, as editor of *October*, his books about Richter, the intensity with which he has studied the works of some artists such as Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, etc. One of the main subjects of his activity as critic and art historian is his institutional critique and the role played by museums. In this way, it seems logical to begin this meeting with his speech. His intervention is relevant not only with respect to what it can contribute from a theoretical point of view, but also because his work reflects a series of historical moments in art in recent years which seem to us fundamental in understanding the present. Two other speakers will also accompany him in the meeting. On the one hand, the critical presence of Simón Marchán Fiz in the Spanish art context has been essential in understanding our recent history. No one is as familiar with the process of change that some institutions have gone through in Spain, and his studies have become a reference point. Finally, it seemed to us important to have the presence of an author such as Santos Zunzunegui who, coming from another discipline, will shed light on various important issues related to the art institution. In the last few decades, the expansion of cinema has led to its unexpected appearance in various museum spaces. His talk will focus on this question.

### THE FRAUDULENT PROMISE BENJAMIN BUCHLOH

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Thank you. I certainly want to reciprocate the generous introduction that Manolo just gave by thanking him for his activities as a museum director in Barcelona; one of the few, I would say, museums currently operative within the sphere of contemporary and recent art production that seems to maintain the initial social and historical task of the museum as an institution of the bourgeois public sphere in its more advanced forms in the present day.

What that dimension of the institution of the museum as initially formed in the bourgeois public sphere means, in terms of its proposal of a didactic introduction to certain forms of knowledge that are otherwise not accessible, is one of the focal points of my talk today. Another focal point of my talk is the question whether the museum in the contemporary situation, in fact, still claims to be part of the legacy of the public sphere and its functions, as it was once defined in correlation with the university, as

the other great institution of the bourgeois public sphere, in which the differentiation of the bourgeois subject in terms of a secularly formed identity, was guaranteed. Since this conference has chosen as its title 'The Fraudulent Promise' that Marcel Broodthaers gave to the fictitious interview he had offered, in which questions and answers were entirely written by Marcel Broodthaers himself, I might as well begin with the question of what type of museum Marcel Broodthaers might have actually had in mind when he made it one of the centres of his artistic investigations in 1968.

Was Broodthaers' series of museum fictions a project of allegorical redemption driven by a melancholic desire to hold on to a disappearing institution whose historical time had come? After all, this was a feature of Broodthaers' work that has to be recalled at this moment: his perpetual emphasis on melancholy as an integral dimension, if not as an integral strategy, of all contemporary aesthetic production from his perspective. But it is, of course, treacherous, as is always the case with Marcel Broodthaers' work, to take any of his statements verbatim, instead of recognising their profoundly dialectical character. Often enough, Broodthaers' words turn our own words or interpretation of concepts applied to his word upside down, even before their meaning has been fully grasped, so it might be adequate to ask at this moment whether Broodthaers' staging of the museum was not in fact rather an act of singularly provocative irreverence, that in fact it was a clown show, very much in the spirit of 1968, dismantling the hierarchical structures of the discursive and institutional seed of power within which Broodthaers' own practice as an artist was constituted and contained. Would that not be a more appropriate description than the melancholic model?

After all, one of the primary functions of the institution of the museum had been, since its inception in the late 18th century, to imbue artistic production with value and authority, to provide it with legitimacy. Broodthaers seems to have assumed at the time, as most of us did until recently, that if a work of art is not accredited by the museum, it cannot function in the market either. The museum seems to have operated as the institution of legitimisation and accreditation, where the fictitious values of the aesthetic are given their political, cultural, ideological and economic warranties and endorsement. This would then be an exact analogy to the way that, after the disappearance of the gold standard, it was the institution of the national state bank that endowed paper with its assigned value, defining it as money. That is, the traditional interpretation of Broodthaers' activities concerning the museum, including my own interpretations, all started from the assumption that Marcel Broodthaers, in a manner typical of the moment of 1968, in fact wanted to invert and upend the power structure of the traditional hierarchical organisation of the museum. This reading, and now I am wondering whether it might still be justifiable to some extent, argued further that in the context of the student and worker uprising of 1968, Broodthaers had at least symbolically dismantled the hierarchies that determined his existence and subjectivity as an artist. When he exchanged the role of artist for that of director of his own fictitious museum, he performed a revolutionary reversal of the classical dialectics between master and slave, or he performed along the model of the workers' council, perhaps, in the watch factory in the south of France, dislodging the supreme directorial administrative powers by the rise of his self-determining subject of production.

But this reversal of roles actually had many more ramifications than I understood at the time. And those ramifications would only become apparent at a much later moment in history, some of them as late as today.

Now, we are in a better position to ask, perhaps, what does it mean historically when the artist gains an absolute artistic fiat, the designated executor of the legal or administrative project of the museum director? And at the same time, what does it mean when the artist yields the traditional role of the rebel, the utopian visionary, the revolutionary producer and critic of the provider of radical aesthetic transformations of the everyday? What does it mean when the artist proposed in 1968 to assimilate the role of the artist into the existing structures of institutional power and discursive control, while, by contrast, the former aesthetic functions of providing access to libidinal ramification, to the utopian anticipation, to radical critique, dissappeared completely from that model of artistic practice pronounced on that occasion?

When the artist defines himself as a museum director, does he assume the position of power? And does the artist as critic and contestant of power relations dissappear? This condition, this reading, this perspective, does not seem a melancholic or recuperative project at all, then.

And Broodthaers' mock assumption of the role of the museum director certainly, from the perspective of the present, assumes an unanticipated diagnostic lucidity and a prognostic radicality in implementing precisely the rapidly intensifying disenchantment of the world of artistic production which we have witnessed over the last twenty years. This condition shows, of course, an uncanny similarity to the present moment, and Broodthaers's museum fictions of the late 1960s now, in turn, acquire a different diagnostic – not to say prophetic – foresight.

In one of his many enigmatic statements from the period, Broodthaers warned repeatedly against the shift of the museum from a place of collection and reception of art to one of production of art. Again, thirty years ago, that statement was simply passed over as a quirky remark whose profoundly prognostic quality evidently could not be grasped by most of the audiences, including myself, of the 1960s.

Who then was still fully convinced of the imminence of radical political and economic changes? Audiences were unaware of the rather dramatically different imminent changes that would actually appear on the horizon of history soon after Broodthaers' departure from the world of art.

After all, what were the criteria and social functions that the museum defended? If anything, would it be the order of its discernment and the apparatus of judgement and knowledge that it enacted? I would argue, first of all, following Jürgen Habermas, of course, that the museum in the 19th century was an institution for the differentiation of the circle of the bourgeois subject itself.

The museum was thus, along with the university, one of the primary institutions of the public sphere, an institution of the production and the commemoration of knowledge, of historical memory and of pedagogy and learning. Yet the museum, while being one of the very foundations of bourgeois culture, was also based on a number of extremely contradictory concepts, and the apparently mad dialectics of Broodthaers' museum fictions tested those as well.

In the current situation we witness an unimagined and unheard-of expansion – not to say explosion – of artistic practices that are generally categorised under the name of contemporary art. As we recall, after Duchamp, it was supposedly merely a nominalistic operation that defines what practice can be called a work of art and what object can be identified as an object that deserves the name of the work of art.

Whatever that status of art might mean at any given moment in time, as we can now

see, it is certainly not a stable category of any kind whatsoever. And if it had been the function of the museum in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century to provide us with the criteria of judgement, of discernment, of scholarship and of critical distinction, it appears that these are clearly no longer the functions that the contemporary art museum performs. And does not want to perform them, because none of these criteria apply any longer to the production itself, or so it seems.

One could make the argument therefore, and I would try indeed to rehearse it at least for heuristic purposes, that the current affluence of artistic production and artistic exhibitions and an immense production and dissemination of art are not, as one might have assumed from the naïve perspective of a once-enchanted citizen, are not signs of an intensified liberation of the senses, of an intense liberation of subjects increasingly set free from the drudgeries of everyday life or other indications of universally accessible creativity and unmediated forms of the articulation of the self. Rather, I would argue that the opposite is the case.

The immensity of artistic production and distribution in the current moment is the immediate response on a level of social collective responses to unimaginable conditions of social alienation and the very distraction of the function that artistic production might once have had.

So in that sense, Broodthaers' enigmatic remarks appear as astonishingly prophetic remarks as well. After all, if the museum was the site of the bourgeois subject, what had determined the dialectics of the bourgeois subject inside the museum was its encounter with the work of art as incommensurable. We would suggest that one of the most important dimensions of that encounter was precisely the subject's incommensurability or, rather, the work of art's incommensurability with the subject.

The subject, when confronted with the aesthetic object, was suddenly – or perpetually – confronted with the reality that was so profoundly alien to the parameters of the subject's proper ideological principles that the very conception of subjectivity was beaten to deep crisis by the confrontation with artistic production.

Furthermore, I would argue that this was in fact the key function the work of art performed for the bourgeois subject. And it was a function that the bourgeois subject had expected the work to perform: to challenge – if not to dismantle – the duality of the bourgeois claims when challenging the hegemony of the bourgeois identity and to oppose it to the seemingly universally valid principles of conduct and of class, as much as to oppose it to the semblance of the naturally given object-subject relation and the objects as themselves. Those were the functions, or among the functions, of a work of art. This condition of incommensurability was one of the great aspirations of the subject of bourgeois Enlightenment culture: to envisage one's own undoing in the symbolic operations of the artistic producer, and to encounter visions of totally incompatible organisations of the functions of the object in society as integral to the structures of the aesthetic object.

To sum it up, the work of art and the subject of the artist appeared as dialectical opposites, negations of the prevailing definitions of psychological, social, political and economic orders of the privileged bourgeois subject and of the object and their inter-relationship.

And the museum, therefore, served as the institution where this encounter with incommensurability, where the undoing of the subject and the liberation of the objects, submission to the production of exchange value, could actually take place.

The museum was precisely the site where that dialectic, fundamental to subjects of experience and social standing, was enacted.

How would I describe the current situation by comparison, then? Who are the artistic producers and spectators and receivers in the present? And what are the functions that the museum performs for the consumers of the artistic production of today?

Let me begin with a rather strange hypothesis. The massive proliferation of contemporary artistic output, if artistic shall it be named, is the exact historical correlation to the intensifying gentrification of the middle classes.

This is a model of social transformation that was, of course, primarily developed in the culture of the United States in the last thirty years. Joseph Beuys' lunatic proposition of the 1960s and 1970s that everybody would become an artist had an actual economic and historical cause: that everybody in the middle classes would become a small kind of speculating capitalist in the stock market, who would thereby fully embrace the ruling principles of the economic organisation of society and guarantee its continuing expansion on a global scale.

The universal new petit bourgeois speculating entrepreneur, of course, needs his own cultural correspondences – and I will try to clarify at least in the shortest of sketches how these correlations operate in the present – of which we are of course part, all of us, in one way or the other.

The first condition for this massive restructuring of the post-bourgeois subject and its object relationships is, of course, the dismantling of all criteria of discernment, and of evaluation. All one has to do is go to the museum of modern art and look at its newly formed basis for contemporary art, where clearly any criterion of judgement, of discernment, of differentiation, of historical specificity, of analytical clarity, of scholarly evaluation, is manifestly absent.

While it is socially presented as the great liberal emancipator from the strictness of traditional hierarchical orders, that dismantling of criteria serves in fact primarily to implement the project that Adorno had already identified in the 1940s, as one of the causes and key symptoms of the very distraction of subjectivity, namely the fatal release of the necessary difficulties of differentiation and of the intrinsic pressures of labour and production from the subject's formative processes. In this sense, the release of criteria of judgement becomes an integral strategy for the overall project of the incessant desublimation of subject experience within cultural production.

From this perspective, some of the particularly enigmatic aspects of Marcel Broodthaers' works on the museum, such as his plaques of 1968, for example, might suddenly acquire a new and different actuality and readability.

Most prominently, the enigmatic statement centred in the plaques, saying: 'Musée, enfants non admit' (Museum, children not admitted). This apparently hostile and shocking reversal of all our pedagogical aspirations – and I remember how puzzled I was when I read the inscription for the first time – suddenly points directly to the nexus that links the culture-fanatic prioritisation of the visual and divisible to its desublimatory undercurrents. And the other inscription in Broodthaers' museum works equally attained a sudden legibility that had been previously obscured, the apparent advocacy of the museum as a site of an eternity of dessicated experience, as a site of unbreakable administrative power. Suddenly it reveals the inevitable structures of resistance, and instruction to an access to the myths of visual immediacy as one of the founding experiences of the conditions of cultural labour and of the laborious conditions in cultural sublimation.



This depressing diagnosis in the present is not without historical and empirical evidence. After all, it was the systematic dismantling of that system of values and judgments, of criteria and discernment, that has defined the practice of the contemporary art museum increasingly in the past twenty years, dismantling from the viewer's experience, first of all, the dimension of an innate dialectic between cultural representation and the ruling condition of the subject formation itself. This is replaced now by fully equating the object of collective consumption with the object of aesthetic consumption. And, of course, it is in the register of the purely visual that such a conflation can take place and where it can be most successfully implemented, since it is only in the register of the visual that the conditions of material production can be miraculously obfuscated, if not set to disappear in the magic metrics of contemporary culture as pure deformation of the spectacle.

Since labour and production are underlying conceptions of the formation of the subject that has now been systematically displaced by the visual display of the myths of a new subjectivity that is accordingly effortless, the museum of contemporary art has become an institution where the myth of such universal subjectivity of the visual is established and perpetually reaffirmed.

It is therefore integral for the contemporary art museum to present itself as the most liberal and generous of all institutions. Because it is its liberalism that puts on display best the dismantling of the canons of the past, the elimination of criteria of judgement in the present and the effacement of the defining criteria that once might have differentiated the massive ideological state apparatus of fashion, design and consumption and opposed it to the practice of the artist, now the museum initiates their conflation, since it is precisely the dialectics of incommensurability that we have initially spoken of, that has to be removed from the experience of the cultural object in the present altogether. The work of art in the museum no longer performs the dialectical challenge to the bourgeois subject, but its function has become to affirm the universal reign of the petit bourgeois speculator as an active and constituent participant in the corporate universe, who expects from the work of art and the museum the affirmation of his sense of entitlement and legitimisation as well.

His presence, and I deliberately say 'his' presence, its presence, communicates in the medium of a specula, as a unified world in which this contradiction and production had been banned as much as memory and critique have been effaced from the institution in which the régime of the visual has now taken over and in which it has seemingly found its natural home.

But the matter is perhaps a bit more complicated still. Like all entrepreneurial operations, primarily driven by the compulsion to maximise the exchange values, and the inescapable condition of generating perpetually an increasing amount of surplus value, the petit bourgeois speculator and investor, like his haut bourgeois predecessor, requires an intense release from the régime of the production of surplus value.

And it is one of the great functions of artistic production in the present, in the massive and continuously expanding displays around the globe, to unify us as speculating and investing participants in the régime of corporate control and domination, in manifold acts of the public visibility of the small and incrementally large distraction of surplus value, in the commitment to the aesthetic production and display.

After all, it cannot only be war that generates the distraction of surplus value. We also need culture to survive the war. Perhaps that was yet another riddle that Marcel

Broodthaers posed to us when publishing, as his very last work, a very tiny book entitled *Atlas à l'usage des artistes et des militaires*.

Thank you.

**Audience** Good morning. After congratulating you on your talk, I would like to ask you something that just occurred to me regarding what I was hearing, and which perhaps you may expand on. I seem to have understood that you stated that the museum as a cultural instrument moved on from being a place where art is treasured, in which a certain type of 'treasure' is stored, to become a place in which art is produced. The museum is the place in which the artistic value of a certain type of object receives artistic legitimisation. If the museum moves from being the place in which this treasure that we call art is housed to become the place where it is produced, then we are confronting the case, for example, in a well-known reference, the *Urinoir*, which when being exhibited in a space consecrated to the contemplation of works of art, is transformed into a work of art. It is the museum, and this is not new, which makes certain objects acquire the condition of being works of art. Many of the developments carried out by twentieth-century artists move in a sense to deconstructing the fiction surrounding art, making visible how the work of art is produced and what exactly is a work of art as such. Perhaps Duchamp can be considered a classic case and Broodthaers a more recent one. If the function of the museum is to produce art, and part of what is produced as art is the deconstruction of the very notion of art we use, making it obvious that art is fiction, the function of the museum then seems to move on to making it obvious that the museum as an institution is fictitious, and instead of commemorating or sacralising the bourgeois or petit bourgeois or whatever type you may wish that are its base as an institution, what it does is make obvious the condition of the social fiction or ideological condition that upholds it, and which on the other hand, it promotes and projects; thus the position of the museum becomes questionable. In other words, what it is making visible is that it lacks any real basis. I seem to have interpreted that at some point or other you suggested this, and if you do not mind, I would like you to go into further depth on this possibility. Thank you.

**Benjamin Buchloh** This is a day-long, profound, complex question but I will try to give a short answer. To make Duchamp the centre of the argument that you are making is perfectly convincing, of course, and as you know, in spite of the universal adulation that Duchamp has received in the second half of the 20th century in particular, there have been several moments of rather complex critiques of Duchamp's proposition as well. And they range from Thomas Hess's famous text *J'accuse Marcel Duchamp*, which was published in the early 1960s when the displacement of Picasso by Duchamp was initially taking place, to 1966's violent critique of Duchamp by Daniel Buren, and certainly Marcel Broodthaers himself constructed a rather ambiguous model of thinking about Duchamp. So, it is not as though the Duchampian model is a universally binding model that has remained uncontested. This is my first response.

My second response is the very fact of Duchamp's intervention within the production of art in 1930 or 1917, whenever you want to situate it, was not affirmed by the museum, right? I mean, that it is of course the epistemological break that the Duchampian ready-made introduces, not the consequence that Thierry de Duve

elaborated and that you're repeating right now, saying that it is the nominalistic definition of the object that Duchamp introduces, henceforth allowing us to define anything we want as a work of art by institutional framing. That is one possible inherent proposition of Duchamp, but I don't think first of all that it is the sole one, even if it is a valid one. The initial proposition is different from the subsequent elaboration of the proposal, by which I mean to say that when an object is, by its nominalistic definition, placed as a work of art in 1930 or 1917 in the framework of the museum, this does not provide us with a universally valid definition of what the museum can do, what the museum should do, or what the work of art should do in terms of its social relationships. It is one among many, and it is one among several that radically contested its credibility in context. It is as though you were arguing that after Andy Warhol we have no other choice any more but to construct artistic practices that are wholly affirmative of the industry of cultural production. That is a consequence of Warhol's work, but it is not acceptable to me to make Warhol the epistemological fundamental point of the artistic production in the present either, as much as the readings or misreadings of Duchamp in 1917 can't become a fundamental point for the museum as a site of artistic production. The last part of my response will be to say there are other models, simultaneous to Duchamp or immediately following Duchamp, that will precisely introduce a wide range of radically different models of what artistic production can do or has to do, totally different, or even indifferent, unrelated or independent from the museum as a site of production. Models in the 1920s and '30s in Weimar Germany as well as models in the 1920s and '30s in the Soviet Union, as well as models of photographic practice in the US in the 1930s, come to my mind. All of them clearly opened up the field of what cultural production's place is, and situated it outside the institution of the museum.

**Audience** Thank you for a very thoughtful and provocative talk. I'd like to ask you one question: well, actually two related questions. You described very clearly the crisis of the traditional role of the museum in the bourgeois society and how there is a transformation of the museum, as I understood, as the stage in which the show of fashion, consumption and design is being represented. My first question is whether you think that the hierarchical role of the museum is still preserved, under new economic conditions of the global market society. And the second question is, if you don't think that the role of the museum as a place for critical discussion of new paradigms is under threat. Maybe you think that market forces are co-opting this role of the museum...?

**Benjamin Buchloh** OK, thank you. Well, If I didn't misunderstand you on something you said about the hierarchical role of the museum... that's one of the key questions that I think Broodthaers is teaching us, with a greater degree of ambiguity, and that's where my intrigue and fascination with Broodthaers' practices and arguments about the museum emerges. Was it really a hierarchical role that the museum performed in the 19th and early 20th century, or was it solely a hierarchical role? Or, as I was trying to argue, I was really trying to come to terms with, as I call it, the late conservatism of Broodthaers' critique, and even [whether] it is a conservative argument, the one that he makes, and I was in fact horrified at the emergence of my own conservatism in the paper as I wrote it, because I heard and saw myself uttering statements I thought I never would. But in the guise of explanatory notes to Broodthaers, I tried to articulate a few aspects that I think are currently at stake. So I will not agree with the definition

of the museum as a hierarchical institution, that's what I tried in fact to criticise by saying that the museum was, or could have been, or did function as a site of dialectical confrontation. So the museum was affirmative and critical; the museum was ideologically structuring and destructuring the bourgeois subject. So in that sense I think Broodthaers' conception of the museum as a place of profound risks is very appealing to me.

In the present situation, and again I disagree with some aspects of what you just said, I don't think it is as simple as handing over the museum to the market forces. That is not new at all, and not very threatening by itself. If the museum was only handed over to the forces of the art market we would really be dealing with a pretty simple problem, right? Because the dross of the art market regularly swallows, swells and disappears in cycles of five years or more. So this would be something we've been living with for the history of modernity, that the art market producers demand outputs that claim actuality, seduction, and then, within minutes, disappear for ever from sight. That's really a relatively minor problem by comparison to the museum as a social institution assumming a central function in the reordering of spectacularity in culture at large. So if the Guggenheim gives itself over to an exhibition of Armani as a one-off event, that is already more complicated than if the Guggenheim gives itself over to the influence of Larry Gagosian. But even that, I would say, is not a catastrophic condition of the current museum. The catastrophic condition of the current museum is that it becomes a fully integrated element in the reorganisation of the spectacle society at large and that it performs an extraordinarily important role, because one side of its valorisation was that it was traditionally outside that regime, and now is fully central to that regime, because this extraordinary miracle of the transformation from nothing into surplus value is on display perpetually, and people are amazed at the expanding numbers of museums of modern art around the world, so the museum attracts more and more visitors. This is quite evidently what is at stake, of course; the absolute attraction of the manifest display of forms of surplus-value production. That is what generates the absolutely irresistible attraction to contemporary works of art. At the very moment when a Jasper Johns' painting, which is basically just a bunch of scribbles on canvas, attracts 80 million dollars, you have to see it, right? You absolutely have to go there and look at the object that performs an economic miracle that it is practically only comparable to biblical miracles, in terms of dematerialisation. So that is one of the magnets of contemporary culture, and it is one of the magnets that generates the museum increasing centrality in the affirmation of the economic order. So, the last part of your question: is there a dimension that counteracts this, if I understood you correctly. Yes, there is a dimension that counteracts this, precisely the museum's most precarious and difficult task which, without flattery to my host, I think Manolo is performing. The museum can operate as a site that equally resuscitates, maintains, commemorates and practises counter-practices, counter-memories, counter-cultural strategies that have been performed by artists in the past and in the present against the apparatus. Whether that is done at the cost of visibility and legibility, whether it's done at the cost of dropping the participation of the audience...well, I don't think that MACBA has as many visitors as MOMA has, and probably never will have, because of the exhibitions it stages. That is of course one of the problems that such a site of resistance or site of opposition and critique faces; there are others of course as well.

Whether that is in itself a socially, politically successful strategy that achieves the construction for a space of counter-memory that has political consequences is a matter of speculation, but for the time being I would say absolutely yes. The museum is one of the very few sites among social organisations where such counter-practices can still be operative. In that sense it does have a function.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** At a certain point I will arrive at my question. I'm starting commenting on your address, saying that in the idea that the worker becomes an investor there is a big divide between workers in advanced societies, like the United States, and in developing societies like Brazil. That is the alienation of surplus value today. I will point as an example in Brazil to the work of Hélio Oiticica, dealing with certain communities in *favelas* and bringing those people into the museum, those people who were not allowed to enter. That, I think, is dealing with the boundaries of a very strict and immobile society. But then, from my experience in the United States, at MoMA specifically, I saw that the understanding of the last four decades in the cycle of MoMA 2000 exhibitions was basically on pop art and minimalism, which meant in a way pop art as an artistic strategy of the US during the Cold War to represent consumption, freedom of speech, some of the values of the American society, etc, and minimalism would be the aesthetics that played subconsciously for the case that was feasible and adequate for a postwar situation, because, in a way, everything could be minimal for ever. And then I will come to the issue of the division between the university and the museum. The museum was resistant to the post-structuralist philosophy, as is clearly known. And then comes the Richter situation. Are Richter and the Baader-Meinhof group paintings in the museum the...how do you say the war prize...

**Benjamin Buchloh** Booty?

**Paulo Herkenhoff** Yes, the booty. Is it seen in that perspective? And then I will come to the difference between your interpretation of Richter in history and the museum curator Robert Storr's interpretation, and how you would establish the difference between the university and the museum in this process. Was I clear?

**Benjamin Buchloh** Yes, complex and clear. Why does everybody ask large complex questions here? I pretty much agree with what you said in the first two parts of your question, and I think it was an accurate description. So that leaves me confronting the Richter question, which is of course very difficult to answer. I could try instead to give the Museum of Modern Art's answer and say that the Baader-Meinhof group is simply an extraordinary work of art. So it doesn't matter what it represents, it is just a great painting. That is what Robert Storr would tell you. It's a fantastically good painting, Richter is the most important painter of the second half of the 20th century and this is his most important work, and that's why we had to buy it. He would say that, and I'm sure he'd say things like that about other artists too. I'm not particularly keen on differentiating myself from Robert Storr's writing, because we have been following the same field for quite a while and with great differences, and I don't think this is the time or the place to rehearse them in public, so I'm not quite sure that I can or want to answer the last part of your question. But it certainly will be on the question of what painting is that our differences will emerge. I don't think that there is such a thing as

good painting that deserves in and of itself to be celebrated just for the fact of being good painting.

I think the work is positioning itself in a number of relationships, in a number of challenges and critical examinations of the condition of representation and what is represented. And it operates within that network; it is not nearly within the formation of the great artisan and artistic tradition where a work of art defines itself as a work of art. So to subtract or eliminate the iconographic dimension from Richter's Baader-Meinhof, or to make its condition of exhibitability or exposability a problematic enterprise. There is of course a cynical aspect as well; that MoMA quite rightly assumes that 9 out of 10 spectators wouldn't even know what it is. So there is a certain calculation going on at MoMA that you can play with that image of rebellion relatively safely. And I suppose a voice like Hilton Kramer's outcry when the painting was bought by the Modern – he even called for the removal of Robert Storr from his position as a curator because he was responsible of the acquisition, and after all these were paintings of terrorists – is the lone lunatic statement of a type of conservatism that is no longer an essential feature of an advanced form of pragmatic politics. I think that's all I can say about this.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** But the university and the museum's respective consideration regarding the same artwork...?

**Benjamin Buchloh** Well, yes... If I were to teach the Baader-Meinhof series as an element in a seminar of Postwar European Art, which I have done and in fact I've just finished it, I would not discuss the Baader-Meinhof series as an example of pictorial achievement. I would have the freedom and independence to take that work and compare it to the ideology of representing history in Germany at that particular moment; the ideology of the impossibility, the difficulty, of representing history and the necessity of representing history that situates Kiefer and Richter in a very intense dialogue at that time. And those virtually cannot contest each other; therefore I would need a more in-depth exploration of the particular context in which those paintings were made. So that would be one difference between the university and the museum that is hopefully still in place.

**Martin Jay** Two questions. One even more complex than the other...

**Benjamin Buchloh** Well, OK.

**Martin Jay** The first concerns what seems to me a provocative and perhaps simplified narrative of the museum, first as a place of contestation and commensurability with the bourgeois subject, and then moving towards complicity with the, at least affirmation of, some sort of post-bourgeois sense, perhaps. The second concerns the issue of nominalism. On the first question: is it possible to say that during that period of contestation and commensurability the bourgeois subject, rather than being challenged, was in fact nourished precisely by the availability of such a site? That is to say, the bourgeois subject is not, and never was, utterly integrated, utterly immanent and utterly self-sufficient, but always involved a healthy space of an alternative reality into which could always escape and then return, like the carnival in the Middle Ages,

where you always had a moment of reversal and you came back to the structures that the reversal had seen through, but in fact never really subverted it. So, in this sense, it is not that radical change, complicity in a way, is there even with incommensurability? The second point is the issue of nominalism, which is an extremely vex and interesting issue, and you mentioned Thierry de Duve and the idea of pictorial nominalism, Duchamp's praise that De Duve makes a lot of ... Adorno in his *Aesthetic Theory* has a critique of nominalism, not talking about the visual; he doesn't have any sense of Duchamp, but is talking in terms of the ways in which generic traditions are subverted by the fetish of the new, by the fetish of simply naming, rather than working off tradition. And argues that, in a way, this is problematic because it gives too much power to the designated subject, too much power to the wilfulness of the subject, and it doesn't, in a way, take into account the previous resistance of generic forms that are not reducible to the new, not reducible to fashion, not reducible to what the subject constructs. Now if indeed, this is, let's say, the fallacy of nominalism, what does exist today that resists nominalism? Is there any way in which we could go back to generic forms? Is there any way we could go back to resistance of material, or whatever you want to call it, which is not produced ex nihil from the subject? How can we avoid the fetish of the new without going back to something that is retrograde?

**Benjamin Buchloh** Well, thank you for those two fabulous questions! I will try to answer them somehow. The first one: yes, I know. I don't think for example that Cézanne was a space of recreation for the bourgeois. Tim Clark gives us this wonderful story about one of the first major Cezanne collectors, who committed suicide when he went bankrupt, because he felt morally ashamed that he had failed in the construction of his role as a bourgeois. This is one of the greatest examples to me of what a bourgeois collector might have been. The other example that I always look at is Charles Ephrussi, the banker of Odessa, who became very successful in Paris as a banker, became one of the foremost scholars on Albrecht Dürer of his time, a banker who was also an art historian. He commissioned still lifes from Manet, and overpaid for one still life because he was so enchanted with what Manet had given him, so that the painter sent him an additional second painting of a single asparagus, just to compensate for the overpayment that he had generously received from Ephrussi. That type of dialogue, anecdotal as they both might be, is to me incidental, and I'm sure we can explore this much further, of a very complicated relationship between bourgeois collector and artist in the 19th century. So, yes, of course, when you spoke of that space for recreation and reaffirmation we may refer to Gauguin, for example. What was Gauguin's role in ascertaining the bourgeois subject's centrality in a colonialist view of the world?

I think you have a good case there. One could easily corroborate this, but I don't think it was so clear-cut that dipping into the museum was always a space of temporary digression, diversion, disintegration in order to reaffirm the self afterwards in the purview of his or her daily pursuits of universal conquest, exploitation and domination. I think the answer is that Cezanne in 1880 didn't allow that, and if you really engage with that, it forces you to recognise that your modes of perceptions were ultimately fraudulent and false in many ways. So, yes and no would be the answer to the first part of your wonderful question. I think it was a very complicated relationship. Did Warhol allow you that when you went and saw a Warhol exhibition? I don't know any more. This brings me to the nominalist question and of course Adorno's quote, which I wish I



had had when I was working for this presentation, since it is a perfect articulation of that problem. However, it is contradicted by Adorno's own judgement when it comes to music re-evaluation. For example, if the quote that you introduced were valid, his critique of Stravinsky could not be as violent as it was, because Stravinsky is the composer who reconnects with tradition, whereas Schönberg is the composer who inflicts nominalist novelty on a completely absolutist regime that excludes every other operation. So that's a strange contradiction, but it's a very crucial contradiction in artistic theory and practices for all of us, I suppose.

To answer the last part of your question: are there moments in the present where such a dialogue between redefining, re-engaging the tradition in the present are evident? I would say yes, there are. I think one of the greatest examples is Marcel Broodthaers himself, with his enigmatic invocation of the 19th century that looks sentimental, nostalgic, melancholic, perverse, ridiculous, and ultimately like a transvestite, but is really not, as I've been trying sketchily to explain today. The second example that comes to my mind in a manifest and extraordinarily complex way is the work of James Coleman, whose entire project is, in my understanding (and this is not the only valid understanding at all), but I understand Coleman's work as precisely a massive undertaking of confronting the contemporary culture of spectacle with traditional forms of constructing visual representations, narratives, experiences of history, and making them perpetually incompatible in the work that he constructs. And the last example would be in fact Gerhard Richter. One of the reasons in fact that I'm so attached, so enslaved to his works, over 30 years trying to write about them, is precisely because it took me a long time to figure out whether the man is a deep reactionary or not. Because if you see paintings like *Betty*, or paintings of the photographic representation of his wife in the last ten years, they are often bordering on the absolutely unsufferable threshold of the *retour al order* practices in painting, with deeply sexual implications that are rather unpalatable at times. So, that is an ambiguity that I think...not a lot of, unfortunately, but some contemporary works have tried to perform again and again and tried to engage with that. I think that Richter's perpetual dialectic of remobilising the artisanal dimension of painting, while trashing it and subjecting it to an enormous computerised form of digital abstraction with painterly means...well, that is precisely the model that probably Adorno would have discovered, had he ever looked at contemporary art other than Pollock.

**Audience** Perhaps I am going back to the same question that Martin Jay put, but in a more pedestrian way, not as well stated. In the sort of dialectics that you have presented here today in which, let us say, the museum hypothetically should resist the sort of intensification of the market logic that surrounds it, and even at times, the intensification of the laws of real-estate value, well, we know that many museums besides being containers, operate as catalysts of a financial reality... I think that if we also view it from another perspective, what has taken place is that the exceptional role that modern and avant-garde art should play has been assumed by the logic of capitalism itself. And, in this sense, I am referring to what Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello wrote in *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, in other words that sort of Weberian update of a logic in which the exception produced in the field of art is incorporated as a motor for the renovation of capitalism itself. Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello described in a very clear way how those claims of autonomy, freedom and flexibility are now the ones that



define the new entrepreneur in capitalism, so in a certain way perpetuating this idea of the museum as an exceptional place, and it is true that Adorno stated that as soon as the exception is neutralised, that exception which characterises the work of art, the work of art quits being art and becomes any other thing in the midst of that society... in other words, it is valued in the same way as economy, etc... What I mean is that I really have the impression that in your presentation, you were describing a need for resistance because you describe it from the standpoint of the museum, in other words, the field of art. It should be added that I think that this is something that would help to define that strange role of nominalism as well, which even capitalism has taken over. We should not forget language as a work station. One of the interesting things that happened in the 1970s is how a resistance to this visual dominance that rules or runs rampant in the museum is the moving of the work station to that of conversation. Language thus becomes the studio the artist has lost, and it substitutes for it. It will be the place where his or her work will be produced. In summary, I have the impression that you have described this dialectic from the point of view of the museum, from the place of resistance that, let us say, was traditionally assumed by the work of art. But when this exception is threatened, it gives the impression that what we are facing is a persistence, rather. In other words, resisting these external logics of the museum is as if, in some way, we continued feeding the renovation of new capitalist forms of innovation, if we trust the logic that Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello described. Well, I don't know if the question is clear or not. I simply wanted to offer another twist to the dialectics you have stated here today.

**Benjamin Buchloh** OK. Obviously your argument is compelling and possible. It has been made in many ways. One example that comes to mind is the work of Hans Haacke, who conceived the museum as precisely such an institution. And there is evidence confirming your statement. What I am trying to suggest, however, is that neither artists nor spectators nor institutions are ultimately exhaustively defined by one particular, even if dominating, even if hegemonic, ideological tendency. Those with historical hindsight will know that it would be utterly foolish, for example, to say that the work of Antoine Artaud was nothing but rejuvenation of capitalist theatre. And likewise it would be foolish to say that Martha Rosler's work has no other function but to rejuvenate the museum's function. So we do have to recognise that cultural practices are still available in a variety of forms and that they are very valid and very successful in contesting hegemonic culture. So I'm not that comfortable with collapsing the two spheres as quickly as you stated. Not all museum practices, not all museum institutions. As I said before, there is evidence in some places that could inform that logic. And a more complicated question, and this is one question I cannot answer, is whom do they address? What type of audience do they form, what type of audience do they actually communicate with? Do they communicate with a minority of disgruntled MacGregors, like myself? I mean, do they communicate with a number of isolated, obsolete subjects who haven't found their place in society and who don't feel comfortable affirming what is going on that is glamorous and seductive and splendid around us, and why follow it? I don't quite know... Or do they contribute to the formation of a different type of subjectivity that eventually, or currently already, will have a voice and have political stances that will have political consequences in redefining what cultural representation and communication in the present means. That's a very modest

definition, it is very neutral, it is very explicit, but I think that would be the minimum I would ask for: that what the institution achieves and what the spectator can contribute and will contribute be the consequences that might come out of such a practice. It doesn't sound like a grand historical horizon, but I think is a very specific incremental project more urgently necessary than ever in my mind.

**Manuel Borja-Villel** If there are no more urgent questions, I think we can leave it here, because later we are going to continue with similar subjects. Thank you.

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**MUSEUM RUINS SEEN FROM THE POINT  
OF VIEW OF THE ART INSTITUTION,  
RECEPTION AND ONTOLOGY OF THE WORKS.  
SIMÓN MARCHÁN FIZ**

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In my brief intervention in this round table, I will point out in the first place something that is quite obvious, which is that each museum is an individual case that requires being undertaken in a specific way, without falling into the fascination that the models of modern history irradiate, such as the classic MoMA of New York or current settings of mass culture such as the 'Beaubourg effects' at the ends of modernity, the Guggenheim of post-modernity and others of a similar nature. Almost everyone, but above all, political authorities of public museums feel an overwhelming fascination for these models as their transformation into museums for the masses affects, from the point of view of the politics of signs and symbols, political profitability, and has a repercussion because it belongs to the public area to an ever larger degree of the logics of liberal economies; if not self-financed, at least gratifying financial results are obtained from them.

In my opinion, we must not let ourselves be deluded by this type of mirage as in the everyday reality we discover a range of very different museums. In this sense I would say that in the same way as in architecture one speaks of different scales of intervention, museums, Spanish museums more specifically, offer a variety that must be directed in a way that matches the different formats. A museum located in a big city is not the same as a museum in a medium- or small-sized town. The numerous examples in Germany or Holland in Europe made this clear many years ago. Thus general recipes are not valid, be they imported ideas or our own creations, even though this obvious evidence does not mean that we should not be receptive to lessons learned in our own or in foreign examples that precede us.

At any rate, what I suggest is that, equally averse to moaning about the crisis as well as intoning high-sounding speeches that can only plausibly be applied to the museums of the great world capitals, the obsession for adopting or adapting to 'master narratives' that are hegemonic is a bad policy that will only serve to cover or hide the peculiarities of each museum. For this reason I think it is advisable to appeal to distilled common sense, never without leaven from numerous recent experiences and the problems arising in each venture.

In a word, initiatives worthy of admiration and applause have arisen in the current

network of museums dispersed throughout our country that were unheard of just a few years ago, but it is crystal clear that their problems are not solved by following models such as MoMA, the Pompidou, Guggenheim and other similar museums. It is not possible to avoid, therefore, approaching each museum with the specific coordinates of their origins, history and development, in the geographic settings and distinctive and particular situations in which they operate, in their conditionings and their real possibilities. Truly, for me the first thing is to have a clear idea of the institution, define it and grant it an operating scope, an effectiveness no matter how limited, to avoid falling into patterns that are repeated over and over again. This preparedness would affect both standard-bearing museums such as the perpetually argued-over Reina Sofia and, even more so, medium- and small-sized museums that have been created recently by regional or town governments.

At the same time, among recurring matters are the dialectics between the museum, which depends on a collection, and the art centre, which is linked to the activity of the exhibitions. I have always found this to be a somewhat artificial counterpoint, as a museum, besides other unavoidable functions such as education and research, must attend to the two pillars that are the base of its essence: collecting and exhibiting. In view of the proliferation which is not always justified by social realities, what happens is that Spain does not stand out because of the attention paid to collectionism both in public and private spheres. For this very reason, due to its lack of works, in many cases it has had to make a virtue of necessity. In other words, more attention is paid to art centres and inversely, when museums have a collection they are not always receptive to the versatility required from them as art centres.

Misunderstandings, therefore, go both ways. At any rate, from the start it is advisable to state clearly the option to be chosen: museums that assume the double commitment, balance or even tension between the heritage they hold and the current need to exhibit, or art centres dedicated to tracing the mappings of artistic sensibilities, current works that inevitably will not take long to become antiques. And thus, if we do not want future generations to lament a lack of collections, of works (which of course is not to be mistaken for permanent exhibition of them), if we do not wish for these generations to think that their forebears sidetracked the art of their times, in the way we did regarding what happened to art during the 20th century, we must bring about once in a while a stop in the endless flowing current of novelties to retain the fragments, the rags even, of the artistic life of the present, of whatever nature and means they may be, which in the future will be raised up as testimony of our times and will become our era's heritage.

As well as this, in the operation of existing museums as well as, above all, those newly created, it is not enough to promote their opening with enthusiasm and loud publicity, but, as it is easy to gather from the negative experiences we have been reaping all around us, it is no less relevant to foresee their future operation and even more so, assume their due maintenance, carefully measuring the strength of their finances, policies and social assets. At times there is an impression that their promoters are more interested in provoking a media impact rather than being committed to the consolidation of the museums. Thus we cross the thresholds of territories that, due to the dependence of most museums on public funding, are openly political, and taking into account the memories of the conflicts that have multiplied in recent years, it would be instructive to analyse a casuistry that is no less intricate, which I simply wish to point out at this moment.

I will only point out that, although these conflicts are not exclusive to our museums, they do deserve to be inscribed in the complex relationships that exist between art and politics in a democratic society such as ours, still marked with too many scars from the past. In this respect, situations vary enormously between museums of Europe and North or South America and ours, thanks, to a large degree, to the differences of their respective micro-physics and macro-physics of power, but also between those in the European continent and those in Spanish museums. In this setting, our network of museums hold easily recognisable relations with what was inseminated several decades ago by the various German 'Länder', although they have the important feature that in that country there existed magnificent collections of modern art that served as a starting point for many of them. Quite the opposite, with rare exceptions, of what happens in Spain! In a similar way to what I was alluding to when referring to the need to pay correct attention to the nature and dimensions of each museum, it would be equally important to have trustworthy data that would situate the museum in its social, economic, political and of course, although for many this is redundant, artistic dimensions. I would consequently suggest the convenience of drawing up a 'white book' of Spanish museums that would offer a trustworthy and well-founded X-ray of each of the museums. From this premise, if these Encounters continue being held, I would suggest that this be a preferential task for future editions.

Meanwhile, I will restrain myself to noting briefly certain general aspects that are affected by the everyday condition of the museum. In the first place, I will point out those that allude to the scope of the museum itself as an institution always suspicious and in permanent crisis, but also those associated with more unusual, perhaps inopportune, perspectives such as the aesthetics of reception and the ontology of the works.

### *The museum institution: an endless tale of love and hate*

As you know, in the world of art we face a continuous pattern of love and hate regarding the existence itself of museums as institutions, ever since the ranting cast against them by futuristic avant-garde elements. It is enough just to remember the famous words by F.T. Marinetti, which with more or less rhythm were repeated or thought in the different scenarios of classic avant-garde elements: 'We want to destroy museums... Museums. Cemeteries! Identical, truly, because of the sinister proximity of so many bodies that do not know each other. Museums: Public dormitories in which permanent rest is taken next to hated and ignored beings! Museums: Absurd abattoirs of painters and sculptors who kill themselves ferociously through colours and lines along disputed walls.'

Very obviously, these words imply the generalised enmity towards museums we can also perceive in Dadaist and constructivist avant-garde movements. An enmity, if not radical denial, of them, as was very well expressed by Maiakovski in a futuristic evening encounter titled *Temple or Factory?*, which took place in November 1918 in the Palace of the Arts of Petrograd: 'Art must not be concentrated in the dead temples of museums but rather all around us: on the streets, in the trams, factories, workshops and working-class districts.'

However, around that time, a first flowering of modern museums took place. Thus, for example, while in 1919 Justi exhibited contemporary works at the Kronprinzpalast in Berlin, avant-garde Russia created numerous museums between 1918 and 1922 under

the heading of 'cultural heritage' and the need to introduce modern art into the new society, in 1929 MoMA in New York was founded on the basis of some very different social and political guidelines or, in 1930, the Kröller-Müller in Oterlo.

During the 1960s, in the pervading critical culture prevailing in May 1968, at the crowning moment for those who appealed to a cross between Marx and Freud, not only was the murder of beaux arts foreseeable, but as an imitation of what happened amongst the Dadaists or the members of the *Proletkult* who disgusted Lenin so much that he accused them of tolerating the childish disruption of communism, the survival of cultural heritage was denied. From such a radicalism that identified works of art with merchandise or fought for it to disappear or dematerialise, it is not surprising that an anti-museum movement triumphed from somewhat Marcusian premises, such as that art had a reason for being in museum formats, that the museum was a suitable sanctuary to reproduce the distance of factuality and be removed from real daily events, as a consolatory enthronement of a more decent world, as compensation for prosaic existence and a substitute for the shortcomings of the social system.

From the broader scope of the world of art, the so-called institutional crisis matched this atmosphere; a critique that, if we are to believe its most relevant representatives, questioned the very status of the work of art, the position of the artist and the role played by the viewer. A questioning that not only affected the usual physical space of museums but had an effect on the network of discourse (critique, history, aesthetics and art theory) of the art institution that was interlinked with other social instances, including public and private powers, the media and the market.

However, paradoxically, during those same years a second generation of museums cropped up, such as the Lehmbruck Museum in Duisburg (1964), the Nationalgalerie of Berlin (1968), the Sprengel in Hannover (1977-79), the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth (1972) and numerous museums in Dutch cities, decentralised Germany or Scandinavian countries.

Lastly, coinciding with the indifference and cynicism that rule post-modernity, acute criticism is overcome or softened by considering museums as institutions favouring the flourishing of a new generation of museums of which I will only mention the most famous landmarks. In fact, as of the start of the 1980s up to today, we are enjoying or suffering a benign or acute epidemic of museums which started after the purifying echoes of May 1968 in France died down.

The parade or procession of simulations started with the creation of the Pompidou (1977) and linked up with the National Gallery of Washington (1978), the new Picture Gallery of Munich (1981), the expansion of the Tate Gallery in London (1980), the Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach (1982), the New Gallery of Stuttgart (1982), the Frankfurt Museum (1983), the Museum für Kunsthandwerk also in Frankfurt (1985), the remodelling of the Whitney in New York (1985), the Fine Arts Museum of Atlanta, GA. (1983), the Museo de Mérida (1985), the IVAM in Valencia (1985), the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (1989) or the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (1990). Also, parallel with the political and administrative decentralisation of the regions in Spain, in the past decade we were astounded by the successive, almost wave-like, creation of museums known to all of us. Something similar has happened in other places abroad.

As far as other things are concerned, the creation of museums is not only relevant all over the world, which would imply a merely quantitative matter, but also perhaps the

most surprising thing is that, along with contemporary art museums, being equally backed are modern art museums, archaeological, historical, anthropological, ethnographic, science museums, etc. Not only artistic products, but wide areas of human activity, are ending up in museums.

Keeping strictly limited to artistic museums, perhaps this new situation answers the welcome that is being enjoyed in the area of aesthetics by the institutional theory of art. According to this theory, successive works of art, above all, ever since those called *indiscernible* in the wake of the ready-mades by Duchamp, Warhol or Broothaers all the way to the most shocking ones of today, are receiving recognition as valuable examples or candidates for aesthetic appreciation by some people or groups of people who, rising up to be guardians of a virtual imaginary museum, act in the vicarious function of the art institution and end up in its most prestigious institutional space, which for now, in spite of everything, is still the museum. Seen in retrospect, what stands out in the scandals of artists who move in the circles of an institutional critique, particularly the anti-museum, is a continuous renegotiation of techno-artistic conventions accepted by the institution.

Even, as opposed to radical differences of past years, today hostility towards the museum is softening, the most notable proof of this being their proliferation, in the understanding that within the logic of the system, they work as necessary mediators, although they are not enough. In this sense, even if it is clear that as soon as an outstanding agent in the entire art institution legitimises its works, it is no less true that it can become exclusive and oppressive. As for the rest, it is worth thinking that, after the historic experience of the past forty years, anti-institutional artists of the first generation are comfortably installed in the spaces of museums and institutional networks, including a reevaluating of their works, which at that time was unthinkable in political economy although not in sign politics, while new generations are not very much concerned with these matters.

In this matter, at times I have the impression that the works, and even more so the artists, find themselves channelled between the art institution, which is not innocent at all, and what I would call the liberation of the new spectator. If up to now the museum sanctioned the works when these already existed, today they are legitimised even before they are produced, rising up as instigator of all value, guardian of the aesthetic rules in an era in which they supposedly do not exist. In sum, the museum works as a promoter that aspires to show an art that still does not exist materially, yet is already legitimised before crystallising into a piece of work. To a large degree, the almost generalised practice of presenting projects instead of works is the warranty of this presumption. The processes of legitimisation have expanded so much that, prior to being produced, any work of art is legitimate without knowing its tactile results. Ideas, and not precisely Kantian ones, have gone much further than could be imagined. The rest is solved by mere confrontation, in the regime of competences that are communicable or not communicable to the public circle.

As a consequence of this and in a somewhat paradoxical way, among the diverse agents of the art institution the museum has been strengthened as never before, although this is also at the cost of having to assume numerous transformations provoked both by new ways in which works are received and by their nature and the difficulties inherent in their showing, exhibition, projection, stocking, digitalisation, or whatever, in the museum.

*Short incursion from the aesthetics of reception*

In an ideal, almost transcendental plane, the museum is in debt to the reasons that, throughout the eighteenth century, created it as a mature fruit of the Enlightenment. From this point of view it arises with the explicit will to rise up as an educational institution in tune with the ideas of the *Bildung*, of a tutoring of the human race, which after recognising aesthetic work as a human activity that is different and irreducible from other activities from an anthropological point of view, raises up works of art to a level heretofore unknown: that of an autonomy that appears to distance it from its physical and historical and social setting.

In this new situation, linked to the constitution and emancipation of the modern, bourgeois 'illustrated' subject, the museum, insofar as it is a space that stands in the public orbit between the private creation of the artist and the perception of his works, safeguards the effective practice of universality of tastes, making all mankind equal in the contemplation of art as free citizens, equal in rights to the most noble. A liberal democratic view of the museum still full of optimism which, even though it can be marked as idealistic and romantic, elevates it to being the artistic institution that is the most suitable guarantor of the ideal of equality in aesthetic-social ideals of the citizens, the dream that visionary poet Schiller dreamt of in his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*. In spite of everything, the commitment of museums to the emancipation of each subject is still in force today. The enlightened utopia is carried out, at least partially, in museums. But if it were not so, to ensure that there exist repeated calls for artistic education and the relevance granted to the departments dedicated to this.

This optimistic vision helps us understand the pre-eminence that the museum enjoys as a physical space, as container, where the works without a known destination arrive, the new autonomous works. But if this happened in liberal societies, their current exaltation is not explained but for the belief that they continue being an institution, which in spite of the ambivalences and contradictions museums have, still guarantees public space for exhibition in democratic societies better than any other institution. Not for nothing, attached to a privileged typology of civilian architecture, do the new museums not only aspire to be considered renowned architectural buildings, almost works of art in a strict sense of the word, but at times total works of art, as well as landmarks or monuments in the texture of the city that will be engraved in the collective memory. The construction of new museums is one of the most desired commissions by 'star' architects of today because of this. This is the reason also for recent museums being associated with the most renowned names in the international scene of today.

However, I would add that today's museums are not removed from the changes being suffered by the recent aesthetic experience before the works of art. Concerning this, I would evoke three typologies of museums whose origins date back to the imperial *fin de siècle* Vienna.

In the first place, when Camilo Sitte reflected on *The construction of cities* (1899), he conceived the museum as something uncontaminated by reality, which should strengthen the past against predators of the present. For this reason, finding inspiration in *Der Fliegende Holländer* by Richard Wagner, he baptises it as *the Dutchman's Tower*, and moves it to a barren beach, convinced as he is that, only by siting it outside the urban metropolis could it be possible to cultivate the necrophilic fantasy and



store a total art history (*Gesamtkunstgeschichte*).

Probably, today it is not necessary to exit the city for this history to become a history of total collectionism (*Gesamtsammlungsgeschichte*). Perhaps it has something to do with the current trend of 'museabilisation' of everything, or equally, the disappearance of today in favour of the construction of remembrance as a phenomenon of the times, as if we were startled wandering amongst the ruins of the past. There is also an aesthetisation and an ethnologisation today of the objectual and signal worlds. Modernisation has backed a speeded-up artificiality and a de-historicisation of reality that are being compensated by a very peculiar development in one sense for history in its conservation activities, as stated in museums, monuments, heritage, etc. A sense, however, that is not geared as much towards the fields of knowledge as to the generality, to meta-functional meanings, aesthetic meanings that are not very different from those distilled at the turn of the past century from African idols in Primitivism. This phenomenon is affecting equally works of art and non-artistic works, bringing closer or almost confusing the first with the rest of the system of objects and images.

J.M. Olbrich, on the other hand, received in 1898 the commission to build the House of Secession in the new Vienna Ring and he fixed as his goal to erect 'a temple for art that would offer a serene and elegant site of refuge for the art lover'. The results, which were well received, were white spaces, pure and clean, inside this magnificent building that, projecting towards today, could be considered the embryo of the museums in their settings as temples of art. In other words, all those committed to the enhancement of the artistic experience considered as a disinterested and condensed aesthetic contemplation. This type of refuge, that tilts towards inwardness, is more frequently found than we believe, although they are more frequently located in medium- and small-sized cities, and also in distant enclaves in nature, explicitly reserved for them. Although it is not a museum, the Rothko Chapel in Houston would be the epitome of this tendency.

Lastly, another great Viennese architect, Otto Wagner, was not so fortunate as to receive an order to build a museum, and therefore he had to settle for sketching out several of them. Amongst these was the *Gallery for works of art of our times* (1900), interpreted as a dynamic showcase that 'will present an image of the state of artistic production of the upcoming century'. We would be before a proposal in which the priority would be the exaltation of currentness and the exasperation of the spectacle. Thus he anticipated what Baudrillard very aptly named the 'Beaubourg effect', an effect that is amplified in the Guggenheim effect and that of all those museums so beloved by the masses and choice venues for good political strategists, in which the exhibition of works of art is inseparable from urban marketing and media visibility, or even overwhelmed by both. Obsessed with attracting the masses and seducing them, even if only because of the spectacularness of their architecture, all the rest is subordinate to these goals, with no importance placed on the works themselves, and above all, lacking a collection – an exaltation of currentness and exasperation of show that, unless they watch out, will contaminate other typologies.

According to the nature of the three typologies insinuated above, in each one of them there is a predominance of subjected behaviours, respectively aesthetisation, contemplation and mass spectacles, yet further tensions are springing up among these. Leaving aside the phenomenon, crucial for me at this time, of the aesthetisation of artistic and non-artistic works, it is becoming more and more frequent each day to observe that even today on certain occasions, the works can be perceived as bastions against the disappear-



ance of the aura, while on others the authority of the aura falters. Or in other words, frequently artistic experiences are unhinged, swinging between the seclusion of traditional perception and the dispersion or distracted reception. In most cases our experiences are hybrids, or they move continually from one direction to the other.

In these situations our reactions become closer to those of an integrated state of masses, of constant flow and accelerated circulation, which imbues us equally in crowded visits to museums, be it when, for example, we attempt to view a painting such as the Mona Lisa in the Louvre, or when we are overcome by physical and psychic exhaustion due to the excessive number of works we rush to see in a large exhibition, the duration of the visit, the spatial competition with other gazers, etc. In these and other similar cases the aesthetic experience before the works can even be transmuted into something anaesthetic.

Not for nothing, according to an art legend, did the Japanese authorities trace in 1975 signposted tours along which visitors had to pass in single file, with a maximum time of ten seconds to contemplate the Mona Lisa. The same could be said if we agree to visit a grand exhibition of Velazquez or Goya in Madrid, Van Gogh in Amsterdam and even the peaceful Kröller-Müller. In this and other situations ever more inevitable, the echoes of those words by W. Benjamin resound today when he wrote: 'The mass is a matrix which today supplies... all known behaviour before artistic works. The massive growth of the number of participants has modified the nature of the participation.'

On the other hand, what is happening to the works not born to be unique or auratic? As opposed to the provisions by Benjamin himself, who was excessively credulous in these matters, the aura does not solely affect the work, nor is it quickly eroded because of technical reproducibility, but rather, the aura that emanates from the ontology of the unique, autonomous work, in its exhibitional value, at times appears to overlap into the auratic experience of the reception in certain works secluded in 'black boxes' of exhaustive exhibitions such as the *Documentas*, the *Manifesta* or any other quality presentation of audiovisual works, or even some that are transmitted through the net.

Lastly, before ending these brief notes, I will permit myself to insinuate certain suggestions on the transformations that are becoming inchoate in the very nature of the works of art, and what they imply for their presence and permanence in museums. In short, I refer to the aspects linked to:

### *The new ontology of the works*

With this expression I allude to the transformations being experienced by works of art in their physical nature and the consequences that result from this in their relationship with museums. Indeed, as the work of art in our modernity breaks through its links and increases its exhibitional aesthetic value, it loses its home, loses the physical framework, what we call today, not without a certain solemnity, the *context*. This rupture or loss promotes an unconditional mobility, an erratic and errant destiny that accompanies it from its first emergence as a modern autonomous work.

Once again, in a somewhat paradoxical way, if on one hand the museum bares and consecrates the absence of links of the works with their settings or contexts, which aside from anything else, no longer exist in its origins, on the other hand, it intercepts that same mobility, transforming itself into one of the few resting places left for works which are already dispossessed of a concrete destination or born to perpetuate them-

selves in their condition of being erratic. They even have to thank the museum for being a sort of reserve that will grant them a new classification context. The existence of a collection of works insofar as a fiction that is more or less coherent in arrangement in the new spatial setting that they supply the museum with is the reason for this. However, it is no less evident that when the new museums excessively enhance their willingness to grant the works a new home, in nostalgia for the lost one, numerous tensions can appear between the works and the new spatial settings. How to interpret otherwise, for example, those that arise from the demands of some works that are autonomous and architectures that exalt that same condition? Don't some architectures of the new museums overshadow the presence and lead role that should be played by the works themselves? In such cases we would classify these museums as narcissistic.

In others, as noted in the museums of Mönchengladbach, the Castello de Rivoli, the Frankfurt Museum, the 'installations' of all type and genre or the site-specific works aspire to recover links with the place, but in such an attempt, do they not terminate any possibility for future development of the museum? Nonetheless, perhaps these more acute matters are stated when the museums attempt to house works that, at least since Land Art onwards, place in crisis the ontological status of the modern autonomous work and slide without any complexes towards the expansion of art. I have always thought it made no sense to contemplate physical works of this type, which should be placed outdoors, secluded in the narrow and oppressive spaces of a museum, coexisting with many others with which they openly clash, or even are speared by an impertinent ray of sunlight that dissolves them in the artificiality of a vulgar setting. For this reason, sometimes I find it pathetic to stumble onto ontologically expansive works that are trapped in museum spaces until they become blurred, precisely because of their expansive condition.

In other instances an ambivalence is revealed in which the two counterpoised aesthetic attitudes are woven, in which, without exception, art acts preferentially insofar as its power for symbolisation or realisation is concerned. I think, for example, of the one fed by oppositions such as those interposed between art for art's sake and social art, autonomous art and art fused with life, laboratory art and production art, aesthetic art and life art, seclusion of the aesthetic experience in works of art and their expansion in the overflow of genres between old and new media, etc.

For example, what is meant by the verification that ever since classic avant garde movements, some manifestations resist being ghettoised as works of art and have the ambition to intervene in reality itself, be it the architecture of the city, industrial production, daily living or even social and political life? I am here thinking of those artistic practices that tend towards the utopia of their own realisation in areas of reality that are very different, yet share the common feature of overflowing the usual artistic territories, the genres of artistic historic tradition or modern art.

From a second, more sceptical position, on the other hand, without raising too many hopes, they try to make as much as possible of what the modern autonomous works and their survival offer in themselves, be it either their powers for symbolisation, gentle narcotics for consolation, or simply, concentration of the singular experience in the aesthetic anthropological line of Schiller, Feuerbach, young Marx to Marcuse or the theory of radical needs of the Budapest School.

Thus, we would face attitudes of defence or rejection that are centripetal or centrifugal with regard to museum spaces. The first has to do with the revaluation of the autono-

mous work and its survival, fed precisely by the unusual rebirth of museums. The second position is warranted by those works whose ontological nature rejects any reclusiveness. I would mention among other modalities, practices linked to works of total art, contextualism, interventions in nature, ephemeral art, those immaterial ones, etc. In other words, all those initiatives that go from objectual systems to mass-media systems and, of course, virtual reality, are offered as expanded artistic responses, if not diffuse and generalised.

However, at the current time I consider it essential to evoke two areas in which artistic works, both those that tend to reclusiveness and those to expansion, that are more and more immersed, run the risk of being devalued by excesses or defects in their ontological nature or, equally, their very different existences as objects and works of art. I mean two phenomena that run parallel but opposite directions: museification and aesthetisation. The first accentuates the distinction, the ontological character of the work of art, the second dissolves it; while the first seeks refuge in museums no matter how much it rejects them, the second type overwhelms museums, and in such cases the museums would become unnecessary – something verified by the famous Guggenheim Museum in Las Vegas, whose inevitable end was closure.

From this point of view the generalised aesthetisation that surrounds us works against art and thus against the museum. The works of art, deluged by an almost imperceptible realisation, poured out and diffuse between the aesthetics that, as in the case of environmental pollution, infiltrates any corner of daily life, crystallises ever less in works accepted habitually, dissolving themselves in the tangle of daily objects of design and fashion, of mass media, let alone virtual reality. From this premise we would state that while the ontological nature of the artistic work in its historic or modern sense seems to dissolve in the tangle of the objectual, mass-media or virtual media systems, it can happen that everyday objects from all those systems experience a process of artistic transformation by virtue of their museification.

Nonetheless, as opposed to what happens in other moments of the modern age, now it is advisable to pay attention to a small nuance that can go by unnoticed. Indeed, if before these counterpoised strategies were mutually exclusive, today they overlap in such a way that the flourishing of the museum coexists with its dissolution in diffuse aesthetisation. and although there are few who dare to hail it as the temple of the muses, it continues to be the public space par excellence of ancient and modern works, or even those that hypothetically border anti-museum features in contextualism, dematerialisation or virtual dissolution. What to think, otherwise, of the ‘immaterials’, from video art to cyberworks hastily secluded in ‘dark boxes’, or their reconversion in ever more complicated and spectacular installations? Quite truly the crystallisations of these new artistic practices have not found their place yet, or have ended up in the one that should not correspond to them if we take into consideration their media nature – an outcome that, possibly, the W. Benjamin of technical reproducibility would never have imagined. Perhaps also because of this, we have seen works of iconoclastic or anti-constitutional artists return to museums, and I have the impression that, in open opposition to this environmental aesthetisation, they entrench themselves in a common front amongst all those that wander through the ‘ruins of the museum’.

**BY A DISTANT SPECTATOR.  
FILMS, MUSEUMS AND ART  
SANTOS ZUNZUNEGUI**

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The starting point of this text is nothing less than to point out the similarities of two complementary crises: on the one hand, the conventional museum, the gallery-museum offering the spectator a step-by-step foreseeable tour constructed with the wish to offer its visitors a somehow representative view (depending on the existing works in its collection), of the canonical history of art, and on the other hand the crisis of the film element which, for over a century now, has been regulating the relationships between films and viewers in darkness.

Perhaps the consideration of this double crisis may help us understand another contemporary phenomenon: the growing number of films found in art galleries which adopt an irresistible trend towards 'museification' of films that for a long time have been kept at a distance from the sacred space of museums, with the typical exception of films made by plastic artists.

It is advisable to state this from the start (although we all know it and do not take into account its implications). Films are not an art form. Or at least not in the sense this expression covers when we think in terms of conventional arts. Although we usually think of films in terms of 'industrial art', perhaps it would be better, if we do not want to be fooled, to define it as 'art industry', inverting the positions of the name and adjective used to define it. An industry that at times, we could state (and at times by chance), sees how some of its products become genuine works of art. With this I don't mean that conventional arts are removed from the impositions and tyrannies of the markets, but I do wish to point out that films entail, from their very conceptual structure, a double designation of 'technical reproducibility' and dependence on certain financial conditions that have branded it in its evolution, making it subservient to both show business and to telling a story.

Because of this nobody should be surprised that the museum has not included film works until very recently, and when doing so, imposed draconian conditions on this. It is enough to consider the case of mainstream films, which have only entered museums at the cost of brutal fragmentation, substantial alteration of their reception conditions, transforming them into, in a word, installations. Or using film as a means of capturing the event insofar as that event became transformed into a museumable material. The reason that things are beginning to change in this case may be the double crisis I alluded to earlier, which forces both institutions to seek out synergies, share territories. Although it is true that films (as well as television and audiovisual materials in general) have to confront the problem of audiences (understood in their purely quantitative dimension), museums for many years have lived with the dream of transforming their visitors into a public (in the singular qualitative sense), to end up finding out – due to the pressure of capitalism and show business – that in a more and more demanding way, museums obviously depend for their mere survival on the same possibility of transforming a public to whom the museum was able to tell a story (this is not the moment to ask oneself what type of story) into an audience that can be counted.

Perhaps it is not wild to state that what film artists<sup>1</sup> are seeking when approaching museums is nothing other than a public, insofar as this public is precisely what is barred from them in conventional exhibition formats, and which curators and commissioners believe they find when they incorporate films into their territories: no more nor less than at least a potential audience.

It is true, at any rate, that this double crisis is not new. If we wanted to locate it in the museum, it is necessary to state that it started on the day site specifics began as works that are a feature of this trend, questioning the understanding of the museum as (each one of us can choose the denomination he or she wishes) a 'temple', 'safe-deposit box', 'hangar', etc., as they resist their integration in the museum. However, a further contributor to this crisis is the vice that growing dematerialisation of the artistic object implies for the museum (pressing on the wound inflicted on conventional art by Duchamp, a wound that, like that of the Wagnerian Amfortas, never seems to heal), and also the irreversible expansion of artistic practices towards an event, with the singularity and unrepeatability that implies.

In the history of cinema, we all know that the beginning of the end (ever since when, we've heard about the 'death of cinema') is usually held to be when television made its appearance, questioning the forms of dominant audiovisual consumption as early as the 1950s. However, it is also true that one way or another the film industry has been able to survive the storm, gradually reformulating its options, hybridising its products due to the new demands of television audiences, offering its immense patrimony of images and sounds in exchange, and lending all its arsenal of expressive resources to television in order subsequently to obtain great gains from this. Yet it is no less true that today new times question the very survival of the model of the *Black Box*, the dark hall that has been the place where the dreams of several generations have been built during the twentieth century. Up to the point that the era of digital elements, the Internet and E-mule, begin to make the model, the Lumière installation becomes a thing of the past that seems to be about to be replaced by a sophisticated variant (at the technological level of the times) of the old Edison model that was based on individual consumption of images instead of the collective system that finally won the battle. For this reason, to understand the role played by films today requires understanding (and extracting pertinent conclusions from the fact) that the cinematograph (to preserve the old expression used by the Lumière brothers) forms part of a complex landscape that is not even possible to define with confidence by means of the use of terms so far used to refer to 'audiovisual material', at least to the point in which this field is still subject to the current earthquake caused by the unstoppable expansion of the proliferation and consumption of images that takes place in the virtual space of the Internet.

It is precisely this cancerous proliferation of images that is at the base of a new crisis, which is typical of the times we live in and requires us to pay it all the attention it merits, insofar as it is leading to new forms of icon production and consumption. We need to remember that already in the mid-nineteenth century Feuerbach, in his prologue to *The Essence of Christianity*, put to us a scenario in which he stated that the image was preferred to the object, the copy was more than the original, the repre-

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<sup>1</sup> It is advisable to re-edit the old distinction proposed by Roland Barthes between 'écrivains' and 'écrivains' to point out that in the film world not all those making movies are 'filmmakers'. This is the distance that exists between carrying out a profession (which is very respectable) and getting involved in the task that Klee defined as 'making visible'.

sensation was above reality, appearance was more than being. More recently, on the eve of the events of May '68, Guy Debord warned us that the spectacle was the core of unrealism of current society. Not many years ago Baudrillard spoke of the society of semblance. Even more recently, Slavoj Žižek has insisted on the fact that more and more we live in a reality that lacks realness, a pseudo-concrete world in which the logic that rules the creation of images is none other than that of filling the breach that separates the new virtual universe (that digitalised, constructed and artificially manipulated world that is harder and harder to distinguish from the natural medium) from our daily vital environment.

This is why some authors (Alain Badiou, among others) will point out that the growing dematerialisation of our experience is coupled to a frenetic return to realness that frequently adopts deeply traumatic shapes. Traumatic shapes that give way to their own images, or even better, give shape to two symmetrical movements (*wanting to be seen* versus *wanting to see*) which represent the basest expressions of audiovisual exhibitionism (reality shows), all the way to the presence of that terrorism (which some authors have referred to as 'declarative') in the media (whose audience they rely on), a terrorism that makes the live revelation of horror its fundamental policy, and which rests on the awareness of the attraction that modern viewers have to the iconophilia of violence (a *wanting to be seen* that finds its counterpart in a *wanting to see*). All these cases end up with an ideology in which the media grant themselves the duty of exhibiting everything (making public what used to be private, or transforming the spectacle of horror – a non-narrativised horror – into one of the substantial expressions of its informative policies). Not so long ago, Javier Marías reminded us that 'true and complete information' was one thing and another very different thing is confusing what it is necessary and essential to exhibit with what it is possible to reveal. The fact is that the second part is larger than the first (what is possible to make visible is much more than what is necessary to reveal in order for an event to be understood), and cannot justify an unstoppable production of images which are more obscene by the day.

In such a way it can be said that the 'document' has replaced the 'documentary' today, the presence of the brutal event has imposed itself on its own obscenity. It is less and less a case of 'telling' what happens than of 'showing' any type of scene capable of seducing the view of the audience with its own obscenity. We could say that we are in a world in which the 'event' has replaced the 'telling', the 'fact' has eclipsed the 'communication', the 'presenter' has replaced the 'narrator'.

At this point it is possible to question whether the 'desire for reality' I have been referring to is not an end in itself, if, when contemporary media make a point of enabling us to view events with no mediation, they are leaving the public naked before events that submerge this public in the irresistible pulsation of the brute fact. We may ask if we do not urgently need a new media policy that can permit us to move from the 'document' to the 'documentary', the latter being a territory in which the event can be 'cooled down', 'explored' in all its senses, 'worked out', transformed into 'meaning': if, precisely, this territory of mediation is not, in one way or another, the one that will define the role art plays in our times.

And it is for this reason that we must ask ourselves what the role of art would be in this context. I will say that just as it is possible to distinguish in the history of visual arts a series of works that sought primarily to identify a spectator they wanted to shake up in his or her immediate senses, by means of horror (medieval painting is a

sufficiently clear example of this), and another for which the basic element was not so much to produce compulsive feelings as much as to offer a space for sublimation in which the memory was more important than the immediate shake-up, it seems to be more and more necessary to pay attention to the recommendation made by Bertold Brecht (quoted by Walter Benjamin in his *Little History of Photography*) when he reminded us that: ‘A simple replica of reality tells us less about reality than anything else. A photograph of the Krupp factories hardly instructs us about these institutions. Strictly speaking, the reality has moved on to be functional. The transformation of human relationships into objects, for example, into the factory, no longer reveals the former. Therefore it is a fact that it is necessary to construct something, something artificial, manufactured.’<sup>2</sup>

A fair number of conscious contemporary filmmakers have expressed themselves similarly. This is the case with Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville in their video, made for MoMA and titled *The Old Place. Small Notes Regarding the Arts at the End of the 20th Century* (1998). As in all their works of that period, the two artists present their considerations on the role of art in today’s world and what working artistically means today in the shape of a complex work of visual and audio *bricolage* that does not acknowledge the frontiers between the different arts, and which attempts to question our common areas in art and its functions at all times.

In a part of this work (significantly named *The Infancy of Art*), Godard and Miéville participate in a conceptual tennis match, of which I will transcribe a few brief extracts below:

**JLG** Working artistically is not just observing, accumulating experimental data and later extracting a theory, a painting, a novel, a film, etc.

**AMM** Artistic thought starts with the invention of a possible world, a fragment of a possible world, to confront it with experience, by means of work, painting, writing, filming, with the external world. This endless dialogue between imagination and work enables the shaping of a representation always more acute than what we conventionally consider as being reality...

**JLG** Image today is not what is seen but what is stated in the captions. It is modern publicity. And advertising spaces are occupied by L’Espoir and the Proustian madeleine.

**AMM** And the latest Citröen will be called “Picasso”.

Emphasising the need for a constructed art, as opposed to the fetishism of a naturally emerging reality, the need to think it out in a radical way, is the task occupying a whole series of authors, for whom it is less a matter of drawing up an inventory of reality than of salvaging, by means of constructing a series of monuments, the remnants of a reality that wants to be set aside.

From this point of view, the last film made by the partnership of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet synthesises – as few contemporary works do – this radical

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2 Bertold Brecht: ‘The Threepenny Lawsuit: a Sociological Experiment’, in *El compromiso en literatura y arte*, Barcelona, Península, 1973, p. 113.



dimension of a certain type of film, in its political and aesthetic features. Filmed in the precise place (as is well known, the Straub couple are filmmakers par excellence of place) where the two electrocuted youths whose death part of the cause of the disturbances that shook up France in the autumn of 2005, *Europa 2005-27 octobre* (2006), is made up of two panoramic shots that tour the environs of the electric power station where the bodies were found: the panoramic shots are repeated five times with slight variations in length and sound, and at the end of them follows the caption: *chambre à gaz/chaise électrique*. On very few occasions, as in this short video (which can be seen at [es.youtube.com/user/cinetractstraub](https://es.youtube.com/user/cinetractstraub)), with a duration of barely ten minutes, it has been possible to perceive the exemplary dimension of monumentality of the work of the Straub couple: the pamphlet is exchanged for the tombstone, the immediate gesture of pain for the cold weight of the celebrational monument.

Therefore the means are arranged in such a way as to enable the preservation of a fragile memory that rises up against the indifference of those who do not wish to know anything about how, as lucidly stated as usual by Walter Benjamin 'never is a cultural document produced that is not at the same time a document of barbarity'. We are facing radical art – in all senses of the term, because its decided will to make obvious that 'nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost to history' (Benjamin) joins with its capacity to leave to one side the mere reflection (an abyss that so many well-intentioned works fall into) and open out towards the territory of thoughtful reflection.

**Manuel Borja-Villel** We have talked about the space of the museum as a space which we still have for resistance. And on the other hand, I seemed to have perceived that it is impossible to do anything about it because it all becomes legitimised. I don't know if maybe the solution is to bring the *Spiral Jetty* by Smithson to Reina Sofía or wherever. Possibly the solution has more to do with photographic attempts, with what Blacke Stimson says, with the sense that perhaps Robert Frank meant about *The Americans*, a sense in which the document is incorporated in poetics. I wanted to bring this to the table and learn your opinion about it.

**Simón Marchán Fiz** I simply don't think it is such a bad thing for it to be legitimised, because I don't think there is any other process. During the first years of the 20th century, and even during the 1970s, when William Rubin was speaking, discussions took place about the processes of legitimisation, but today the conditions of possibility of art, once traditional preconceptions have been overcome and modern tastes are accepted, then I believe they are hypothetically and *a priori* legitimised. Legitimised, however, does not mean that you agree or disagree. I mean that, as conditions of possibility of artistic-ness, they are already legitimised. In the Kantian sense, I would dare to point out. And for us to accept the possibility that the conditions no longer exist for resistance... This will be a problem of competences, of the regime of competences. In other words, competences that are both communicational, of active communication, as well as alteration and consensus, even financial, whatever you like. But the fact that it is legitimised is not an ethical statement, so to speak. It is simply a transcendental horizon statement, of possible conditions in which the modern world legitimises beforehand what it is going to do, whether it is going to agree or disagree with it afterwards. It does not mean that afterwards we all have to accept their legitimacy, but the mechanisms that go towards producing legitimisation are already given, I repeat, are already given. And



the very extension of the concept of art and expansion of artistic genres, on the other hand, are of a kind that today have already hypothetically been legitimised from the conceptual point of view, if not from the factual point of view. Now, from the ethical point of view, each person has his or her own opinion, whether we like it or not. This is a delicate and complex subject. It is a little like aesthetic experience from a transcendental perspective or from an empirical perspective. What I am questioning here is the relationship between what is empirical and what is transcendental. Excuse me, because this is a subject for philosophical discussion and not art critique. That is the first thing.

Secondly, obviously I have no doubts that photography solves this thorny issue. But then I also believe that they are two different works. Not the same work. And, besides, the fact that museums attempt to house this expanded world of art is obvious, but if you take it to the limit, in the previous attempts by museums that also wanted to house the expanded world of art, well, it is obvious that it cannot be done, they can't do it. Then, also, why do we in the museums have to be obsessed with the need to house all the expanded world of art? It may be, and I think it is so, there are expanded areas of art that don't need to be in museums. It is as simple as that. What happens is that the extension margin, the rope, has been stretched to such a point that today in the museum we have the capacity to house a series of expanded works that thirty years ago we could not include. Neither conceptually nor physically. Then, just as I admit that there are different regimes in artistic experience, there are also different spheres. Of course, we start with the very concept of art, which is already problematic for us. Zunzunegui talked about whether films are art or not. Well, we enter into debates on the concept or notion of what art is and once we enter this, you inevitably need to state which are works of art and which not. There we enter a space that is more factual and practical, which is the expansion art has experienced in the 20th century. And in this expansion art has experienced, if we continue attempting to insist that all works be in the museum, we would be equating expanded works with traditional autonomous works. In other words, the museum has a much larger framework to work in, but it does not need to include everything.

I find the degrees of artistic experience very important. By degrees, I mean the fact that the concept of art as a notion – the arts... works of art, are many notions, they are the portrayal of that concept of art... Well that is a very Heideggerian debate, very difficult, which it is not necessary to delve into here.

In sum, what I want to say is that we have forgotten that there are different regional ontologies in the world of art, like what we called artistic genres in the past. Now we talk about other things. Maybe we live in an era in which it is very difficult – because reality is like that, as we said a few years ago – to maintain a concept of what in the end is very much a matter of specificity, as we said several years ago, and a part of traditional classicism; I mean the division of traditional genres. Today this division no longer exists, there is more a blend, combinations, etc. and the mapping of artistic experiences is very difficult to articulate. And this also makes it difficult to try to insert them into the museum, or not, because maybe they don't belong there...

**Benjamin Buchloh** I think the problem of the privilege of speaking in public is that the need to capture the audience obliges us to make a point of one kind or another and, honestly, I did not hear the point you are making. I might have missed it. I don't

think a discourse inhabiting as many theoretical positions as possible simultaneously is necessarily a productive approach to the question. But I agree my approach is clearly a very narrowly defined one, and suffers from the attempt to be an art historian and a critic, whereas you have the liberty of being a philosopher, so there's probably a disciplinary difference between us.

The question at stake cannot be answered in my mind by pointing to the diversity of institutional possibilities. Clearly, we do recognise there is a broad range of institutional possibilities that define the spectrum of the museum practices, and that was not in any way discrediting all museums and all practices. I would specifically focus on the question of what is contemporary production and what is contemporary museisation. So, I would say the same as my response to the question of media. Clearly, the influx of media culture into the museum institution poses us the same contest. It is not the influx of video, films or other forms of technology within the sphere of the museum that I find problematic. It is each specific work and each specific subject position advocated by these practices in each individual case, what they actually produce when they enter the museum space, that I was contesting. So I am not by any means defining the fetish of the work of art. I'm in any case arguing for the discourse of specificity of a particular institution and its historical scope.

But it's probably very productive to have a very broad view and a very narrow view side by side. I just feel, for the sake of productivity, to liberalise the situation endlessly to a simultaneous panoply of options, all equally valid, does not lead us very far into the discussion.

**Audience** I don't want to be too reductive, but it seems to me that we need to ask some critical questions here, that are at the heart of these arguments. I think what Benjamin is arguing for has to do with a kind of atmosphere that is created in the museum. I think he has been too modest in backing-off from the position we've just heard. If we look at the film we just saw, there is no way to look at that film without being continually aware of the materials and the formal choices that the film-maker made in producing it. We never leave that. If we look at a Hollywood film at any point, and find ourselves doing that with the film, we have subverted the whole purpose of the film, which is basically to take us into another world. And I think that that's the difference between art and entertainment, and I think we have to ask ourselves here, as a society what do we want from works of art, what do works of art really provides us as individuals and as a society? And is it the role of the museum to facilitate that quality that we want, and how do they do it? I mean, those are fundamental questions here, I think. It does seem to me that the distinction between art and entertainment is an important one, at least in the discursive space that Benjamin Buchloh is talking about. I think that we want works of art to help us, find a vocabulary for ourselves in dealing with what is new and the reality of our experiences, to come to terms with that in a way we don't even have a language for yet. Maybe we will find a language. I think it is an essential role for any society to have such works, and I wonder what role the museum should play in this regard. May I ask Benjamin this?

**Benjamin Buchloh** It would presume that the institution of the museum maintains a set of parameters as well, as much as it would presume that the artist as producer

maintains a set of parameters, and it's also presumed that the spectator demands a set of parameters. That was the system I was referring to earlier when I said the liberalisation of the effacement of criteria to the abolition of the traditional division of institution, market, and critics, for example, or institution, market, and academic knowledge, which was a tripartite division within the public sphere of the museum, was very important, all right? There was a function for scholarship and criticism, and this sounds like the bitter complaint of somebody in academia, but I don't think is only that. It is quite clear that the sphere of critical contestation of a theoretical challenge plays no role whatsoever any more, in the same way that curatorial judgment plays no role whatsoever in the structuring of the museum, or of a collection. That indicates that certain elements, at one point in the not so distant past, formed a triangle of relationships between various disciplinary formats, but now those elements have been cropped out of the picture, and we want to understand why they've been cropped out of the picture, because they didn't crop themselves out. I would argue, first of all, that the museum, as an institution that might have, at some point, represented precisely what you just described, the expectations of what we want to learn or understand, or what we want to construct as representations of experience, is no longer involved in that project. It is involved in a different type of project, namely to become an institution affirming the very annulment of subjectivity that mass-culture and the culture industry advocate on a daily basis, and it has decided to participate in that project with all the benefits that this generates, namely corporate support, mass and massive scale, and complete subjection to corporate interests and mass-culture pulses and mass-culture powers that generate the museum superiority and visibility in the centre of society. I think that it is a fairly affable transformation, which one doesn't have to be either hysterical or Marxist to identify.

**Audience** I would like to address my question to Simón Marchán. I think I understood that the artists who took the avant-garde to its limits would be incapable of withstanding the vertigo that the vacuum provoked and back-pedal, entering into processes of legitimisation. The thing is, I don't know if I understood correctly... Well, if Simón Marchán could continue this argument about the unlimited expansion of the artistic fact, this would then lead us to understand that the interior and exterior of the museum would be the same thing. As a sort of contradiction before a paradoxical argument, almost Zen, in its form.

**Simón Marchán Fiz** The fact is that that is truly the central question. Can unlimited expansion be provoked? Well, I think that if it is produced, it would obviously be generalised aesthetisation. And in my opinion, today the death of art, in the Hegelian sense, even though it is not something pertaining to what we are talking about, will not take place. I believe that the death of art, of which there have been many interpretations, will not take place, but I do believe that a death will take place in forms of art, as is natural and historical. It is so, they can die, and in fact are constantly dying, and this century is provoking a situation that is special in this regard. When the indefinite expansion ends up, at any rate, in the concept of the infra-light, for example, art becomes fundamental in aesthetic gestures, and when they become aesthetic gestures, it is not necessary for the works we know of up till now to be present, or they expand into daily living, mediated and virtual experiences. This is the central

problem of the historic moment we are living through: aesthetisation opposed to art. That, in my opinion, is the central problem of all we are doing today. If that happens, it is an end that I hope does not take place. It would also be a dialectical ending where there would be, permanently fighting each other, a series of conceptions and artistic manifestations against aesthetisation. And, above all, we will have to rethink the entire system of the arts we know of so far. And we are already rethinking these, but if we don't start there, we cannot understand each other because we continue using an excessively univocal concept of art, and we don't know what we are referring to by it. Deep down, when we are talking about art, as Zunzunegui said before, when he was doubting if films were art or not, the concept that we handle most is the one that we have inherited from autonomous art, without even noticing it. And this is just a certain type of art. Let us think of the arts in a Kantian way: the pure arts and the adhered arts, which were traditionally known as autonomous arts and applied arts. Possibly the entire duality that we perceived in modern tradition must now be reformulated. Both through the very concept of art in itself, the question, why is this art? which every day becomes more impossible to answer (even though there are attempts in this regard which we know of, institutional, contextual, etc.), since the scope of analysis of the expansion that has been experienced not only by art as a concept, but also specific expressions and manifestations of art throughout the 20th century, particularly from historic avant-garde moments and their re-editing of the neo-avant-garde art of the sixties and seventies, which is the framework that we have inherited. And this is the crux of the matter. I have been working for some time now, and perhaps there will be a result or perhaps not, on the subject of aesthetisation, because I believe, I insist, that it is the key problem. The subject of aesthetisation that is directly linked to the subject of expansion of artistic genres and expressions.

## BETWEEN THE ARTISTIC FACT AND THE DOCUMENT: THE TRANSLATION

MAIN SPEAKER: MARTIN JAY

OTHER PARTICIPANTS: JEAN-FRANÇOIS CHEVRIER,  
ANTONI MUNTADAS AND SUELY ROLNIK

MODERATOR: NURIA ENGUITA MAYO

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As we were preparing these talks with Manuel Borja, we thought that at this table, as opposed to the previous one, references to the museum, its conditions and possibilities would not be alluded to, so much as the artistic practices carried out within them. Indeed, an exchange between what was said this morning and what will be said now will take place, but the people present here now, although also close to academic areas, will speak from the position of the artist or commissioner, mediators understood as 'propositioners' more than 'authors', to use a term by Lygia Clark which implied, in her work, the overcoming of merely optical contact with the object by means of experimentation, by participation of the public.

The discussion poses two important subjects: 1) overcoming optical regimes and the need for the word, text and writing, as well as experience in training and transmission of knowledge, and 2) the possibility of new fictional devices, new tales and new narratives, that may articulate other viewpoints, enhancing the fact that today urgency also resides in conquering and making visible new spaces of non-spectacular manifestations, which include discussions.

In other words, how to achieve a living presence, a living memory of past proposals, how to achieve maintenance of the powers of contamination and propagation of certain artistic experiences of the past.

We will start with Martin Jay. One of the important subjects for us, which registers the change from modernity to post-modernity, is the criticism of visualisation; criticism of the idea that vision is the definitive element in our artistic perceptions. Undoubtedly one of the people who has performed the most radical work in this sense has been Martin Jay, specifically with his book *Downcast Eyes*.

In this study he carried out a critique not only of post-modern thinking but also of certain ideas of modernity itself, developed by thinkers such as Bergson. These authors argued that visualisation required a certain notion of space, and hindered an experience in art linked with duration, with time. The discussion we are going to raise here will take up these matters again. You all have Jay's c.v. in your hands, so I won't repeat it. I simply wish to welcome him and thank him.

After his talk we will open up the discussion and then continue with Suely Rolnik, who will talk about what is meant by the bringing of a work to the present, that of Lygia Clark, which is only 'perceived' in its widest sense, by experiencing it – how to 'display' a work that is barely a 'potentiality'.

problem of the historic moment we are living through: aesthetisation opposed to art. That, in my opinion, is the central problem of all we are doing today. If that happens, it is an end that I hope does not take place. It would also be a dialectical ending where there would be, permanently fighting each other, a series of conceptions and artistic manifestations against aesthetisation. And, above all, we will have to rethink the entire system of the arts we know of so far. And we are already rethinking these, but if we don't start there, we cannot understand each other because we continue using an excessively univocal concept of art, and we don't know what we are referring to by it. Deep down, when we are talking about art, as Zunzunegui said before, when he was doubting if films were art or not, the concept that we handle most is the one that we have inherited from autonomous art, without even noticing it. And this is just a certain type of art. Let us think of the arts in a Kantian way: the pure arts and the adhered arts, which were traditionally known as autonomous arts and applied arts. Possibly the entire duality that we perceived in modern tradition must now be reformulated. Both through the very concept of art in itself, the question, why is this art? which every day becomes more impossible to answer (even though there are attempts in this regard which we know of, institutional, contextual, etc.), since the scope of analysis of the expansion that has been experienced not only by art as a concept, but also specific expressions and manifestations of art throughout the 20th century, particularly from historic avant-garde moments and their re-editing of the neo-avant-garde art of the sixties and seventies, which is the framework that we have inherited. And this is the crux of the matter. I have been working for some time now, and perhaps there will be a result or perhaps not, on the subject of aesthetisation, because I believe, I insist, that it is the key problem. The subject of aesthetisation that is directly linked to the subject of expansion of artistic genres and expressions.

## BETWEEN THE ARTISTIC FACT AND THE DOCUMENT: THE TRANSLATION

MAIN SPEAKER: MARTIN JAY

OTHER PARTICIPANTS: JEAN-FRANÇOIS CHEVRIER,  
ANTONI MUNTADAS AND SUELY ROLNIK

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Antoni Muntadas is, in my view, one of the most qualified artists to speak of those elements that gather and evoke the paradigm Jean-François Chevrier will also talk about, more than 10 years old, a paradigm that involves activity, information and debate as opposed to the prototype of work and contemplation. I also believe Muntadas's work points to important subjects for debate in these talks, such as the one on the recovery and articulation of images of the past, incorporation of time and specific space in its works, but in an intelligent way, complex and critical, that surpasses the notion of site-specific, and I specifically believe in projects such as the one that will be mentioned today, *On Translation* and *Stadium*, which are fundamental in my view, and which have to do with the subjects we are dealing with. I also believe in the importance of Muntadas as a 'proposer' in the sense that he not only proposes contents and new ways of viewing them, but also new work, frameworks which, in the manner of frames or models, can and should be occupied. This is a work that also implies a great many voices, and therefore evokes the plurality in production itself. Finally, Jean François Chevrier will examine some artistic experiences found in the 1960s, and the research on topics such as ethnology, geography, urban sociology and political ecology.

**AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE  
AND HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE:  
A 21ST CENTURY CONSTELLATION**  
MARTIN JAY

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Ever since Homer – or the gaggle of bards who have come down to us under that name – sat down to commemorate in epic poetry the Greek siege of Troy, artists have been inspired to find in historical events the stuff of literature. Indeed, until Heinrich Schliemann's excavations in Asia Minor in the 1870s, *The Iliad* was generally assumed to be only fictional, with scant basis in historical fact. We now know it to be a mixture of myth, legend and semi-reliable memory of real events, with the precise balance still a source of scholarly conjecture. Even when the first acknowledged historians, such as Herodotus, tried to sift through the evidence to demarcate fact from fiction, the formative aesthetic impulse in their story-telling meant that 'history' as the reconstruction of the past never lost its link with aesthetic fabulation. Like epic poetry, it too needed the inspiration of a Muse, Clio rather than the epic's Calliope, to tell its story.<sup>3</sup> Although the gathering of evidence, indeed the very concept of reliable evidence itself, moved history closer to the orbit of science, the presentation of the results in narrative form meant that aesthetic imperatives remained powerful. In fact, modern philosophers of history such as Hayden White have made a strong case for the in-eradicable permeation of historical narrative – no matter how attentive historians may be to the 'facts' as verifiable evidentiary traces of the past – by the formal properties

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3 Significantly, all the other muses but one – Urania, who inspires the astronomer to tell the future by looking at the stars – are devoted to artistic pursuit: music, dance, lyric poetry, sacred poetry, love poetry, comedy and tragedy.



of different tropic emplotments.<sup>4</sup> History, they tell us, is a representation that, consciously or not, follows conventional modes of narration employed by epics, comedies, tragedies, satires and other aesthetic forms. Meaning is not found in the facts, at least in pristine form, but made by their post-fact interpretations.

Modern historical narratives and the historical novel, which came of age with Sir Walter Scott in the early 19th century, shared a common dependency on the reality effects produced by a welter of concrete details and the adoption of a seemingly neutral narrator telling the story from the outside. Vivid descriptive scenes interlaced with narratives of action evoked the ancient practice of ekphrasis, in which poets devoted considerable rhetorical effort to ‘showing’ something, making it visible through words (a canonical example is the shield of Achilles lavishly described at the beginning of the *Iliad*). The passage from the visual to the verbal has always, to be sure, been fraught with difficulty, with some critics going so far as to speak of the impossibility of ekphrasis.<sup>5</sup> But even if a thousand words had to be marshalled to match one picture, novelists and historians alike have not shied away from the effort required to provide them.

When it came to actual visual representations of the past as opposed to the verbal, tableaux rather than narratives, aesthetic considerations came no less to the fore. Painting in the West may have moderated its obsession with mythical or religious stories and sought instead to depict emblematic historical moments – a change that first occurred fitfully in the Renaissance and picked up steam only in the 18th and 19th centuries – but the way those moments were rendered could not avoid reflecting the traditional aesthetic modes of visual presentation. In the hierarchy established by the French Academy in the 17th century, history painting was, in fact, considered the *grande genre*, above mere scenes of everyday life, landscapes, portraits and still-lives. Unlike those lesser genres, it was expected to have ideal and allegorical rather than merely descriptive significance.<sup>6</sup> Great history paintings like the oft-discussed ‘The Surrender of Breda’ by Diego Velázquez (1634–35), commemorating the generous transfer of power from the Dutch to the victorious Spanish led by General Ambrogio Spinola in 1625, give themselves up to iconographic and formal analysis every bit as complex as those applicable to paintings with religious or mythical subject matter.<sup>7</sup> Showing us a moment with heightened and concentrated meaning invited the beholder to imagine an implied prequel and sequel in a story of unfolding development over time. The norm of the *beau idéal* derived from Aristotle’s concept of entelechy, or the realisation of a latent potentiality in the actual world. It inspired artists to strive for the most representative moment in that development, providing an exemplary synecdoche of the whole narrative in which a plenitude of meaning was encapsulated (for example, the moment of swearing an oath or surrendering a city or accepting a crown).

In the era of European and American nation-building, visual renderings of key historical moments in national narratives – often glorious triumphs, but sometimes stinging

4 Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973).

5 For a recent discussion of the debates over ekphrasis, see W.J.T. Mitchell, ‘Ekphrasis and the Other’ in *Picture Theory* (Chicago, 1994).

6 The balance between the narrative and descriptive components in history painting could, of course, vary. For an account of the tension between them, especially as it is played out in the contrast between early modern Dutch and Italian painting, see Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago, 1983).

7 For a rich and suggestive analysis of this painting and other images of actual historical surrenders, see Robin Wagner-Pacifici, *The Art of Surrender: Decomposing Sovereignty at Conflict’s End* (Chicago, 2005).

defeats crying out for revenge – played a key role in fostering the ‘imagined communities’ that print culture so sedulously cultivated.<sup>8</sup> Even when the history was not that of the nation at hand – as was the case in the Paris Salon of 1784 with Jacques-Louis David’s *Oath of the Horatii* with its ancient Roman topic – it could be allegorised to signify the gathering republican taste for freedom that was to burst forth in the Revolution five years later. By the time of Empire, contemporary history, as depicted on the great canvases of Antoine-Jean Gros, such as his gargantuan and operatic *Napoleon at the Battle of Eylau* of 1808, no longer needed the support of classical allegories (although allegory did not, of course, lose all its charms, as shown by Eugène Delacroix’s *Liberty Leading the People* after the Revolution of 1830). The modern era seemed, at least for a brief moment, to be an era of historical heroism. With the spread of techniques of mass-reproduction, what had been so long the case for religious imagery extended to national iconography as well. By and large, the intent was to provide uplifting history lessons that would mobilise the beholders to feel a common identification with the master narrative of national realisation. Through a process of imaginary witnessing, viewers were given a privileged vantage point on a significant historical event, which they could vicariously re-experience. The moment of beholding the painting in the present – what is sometimes called its rhetorical moment – was conflated with the actual moment of the scene depicted, at least as a desideratum. Even at its height, however, as Christopher Prendergast has shown in *Napoleon and History Painting*, his masterful account of Gros’ *Battle of Eylau*, history painting began to experience significant subterranean tensions, undergoing a nascent legitimisation crisis.<sup>9</sup> Trying to accommodate a new realism of particular, random detail with the elevating function of the *beau idéal* alarmed purists like the critic Quatremère de Quincy, who warned against the invasion of the contingent or accidental. Instead of heroically nude figures, the new history paintings paid attention to the specifics of dress in the modern world. Instead of showing the moments before or after battles, moments cleansed of the carnage of war, which earlier history paintings had disdained as vulgar, they depicted the massacres themselves or their insistent residues. Instead of canvases focused entirely on the heroic central figure, the foreground of common soldiers, often the victims of the hero’s grandiose ambitions, began to loom large. The dead bodies shown in the lower half of *The Battle of Eylau* are mutilated, rotting corpses, not noble, elevated nudes. Although in the upper half the emperor is making a gesture of almost religious benediction, accepting the allegiance of a Lithuanian turncoat, his charismatic body is subtly desanctified by the putrefying flesh at his feet and the wild, mad eyes of the dying Prussian in the lower-right corner. Napoleon, Prendergast shows, was himself the embodiment of these tensions in the artistic genre, a parvenu emerging from the debris of the Revolution who tried to legitimate himself through the trappings of past empires, a mercurial opportunist who knew how to seize the moment, but had trouble elevating himself into a fully accepted symbol of transcendent meaning. Rather than a moment of semantic plenitude, the moment of Napoleon was that the coup d’état, a violent rupture in the body politic that could never be fully healed.

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8 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991).

9 Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting: Antoine-Jean Gros’s La Bataille de Eylau* (Oxford, 1997).

By the end of the 19th century, as has often been noted, scepticism towards history painting had fully set in on many levels. The triumphalist or lachrymose emplotment of their narratives lost some of its allure, at least for artists who began to worry about the ideological baggage it carried. The imperial *gloire* of a Gros battle scene had long since faded, indeed perhaps as early as Théodore Géricault's romantic depiction of the disaster of *The Raft of the Medusa* in 1819, although the popular entertainment of the Panorama continued to show the power of traditional battles well into the century, and *pompier* painting during the second Empire and Third Republic made vain attempts to revive it. De-contextualised formal issues seemed more pressing than either descriptive or narrative ones as modernist art began its ruthless exploration of the media of representation themselves. The protocols of realistic depiction of actual events seemed exhausted – or better served by photography – as the visual arts discovered anew the values of imagination and self-reflexivity over objective reference and representative fidelity to what was allegedly on the other side of the framed window opening on the world.

In addition, it became increasingly clear that the genre of history painting had always privileged certain types of stories and excluded others in ways that could not be remedied simply by colouring the faces of its actors a darker hue or adding heroines to the canon of national heroes. Significantly, women had been prevented from even producing history paintings until well into the 19th century because they were prohibited from life-drawing classes, being steered instead to supposed 'lower' genres like landscape, portraiture or the most base of all, still-lives, which supposedly appealed only to the mere senses rather than the supposedly elevated, idealising mind. Although it took a while, the gender underpinnings of traditional history writing were challenged in a way that found its echo in the visual depiction of historical scenes as well.

These kinds of changes were, of course, uneven. In the 20th century, there were eras such as World War II, when the pendulum swung back, at least for a while, to heroic depictions of historical scenes for the purposes of political mobilisation.<sup>10</sup> Class heroes could receive the same exalted treatment as their nationalist counterparts by practitioners of socialist realism in the Soviet Union. Populist impulses could revive sympathy for an imagined past, often understood in regional or local terms, threatened by the onset of corrosive, homogenising modernisation. Traditional patriarchal assumptions could be reaffirmed in a time of masculinist self-assertion. But when the propagandistic implications of such work became too blatant to stomach, modernist formalism could reinvent itself as the emblem of unconstrained artistic freedom, as it did during the Cold War and the heyday of abstract expressionism.

That heyday, of course, has itself faded, in more ways than one, 'into history'. The vain belief that we were somehow at the 'end of history', to borrow the title of Francis Fukuyama's much ridiculed book about the triumph of liberal democracy after the American victory in the Cold War, has been left behind.<sup>11</sup> Although our mood remains in many respects apocalyptic, as is inevitable in the aftermath of 9/11, we are less inclined to think in terms of 'the end of...' – whether it be painting, art in general, or history – than was the case a few years ago. The 21st century is revealing itself to be

<sup>10</sup> For a recent survey, which covers nine different contexts in Asia and Europe as well as America, see Barbara McCloskey, *Artists of World War II* (Westport, Ct., 2005). As the example of Picasso's 'Guernica' shows, even modernists could heed the call of historical events and respond in their work.

<sup>11</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, 1993)

full of surprises as historical change hurtles us into an uncertain future, and historical repetition revives what we thought was left behind.

But the history that has reasserted itself as a concern for contemporary artists bears only the slightest resemblance to what preceded it. Now the assumption of a progressive meta-narrative, whether of the triumph of the nation-state or the realisation of a redemptive political utopia, is long gone. The allegorical impulse in earlier historical analysis, the ability of events to be interpreted as signs of some larger purpose or destiny, has waned. The idea that a serious contemporary artist would depict a scene from recent history to commemorate or celebrate some momentous event like the signing of a treaty is impossible to imagine. With the fall of Communism throughout most of what was once called the ‘actually existing socialist’ world, any remnants of socialist realism survive only in a parodic and citational way.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, there has been a comparable crisis within the frame of the aesthetic itself, as art history found it harder and harder to provide an orienting master-narrative of immanent development making sense of the past of visual art and providing likely guidelines for the future.<sup>13</sup> The assumption that its history could be read as a series of successive styles faltered with the arrival of contemporary art practices that resist being grouped under any stylistic umbrella. The metaphor of an avant-garde struggling against a resistant philistine public in the name of a grateful and enlightened posterity, so long a source of self-understanding for artists seeking to validate their work (and rationalise their current lack of popularity), is now virtually exhausted. Without a firm sense that contemporary art is at the cutting edge of a general progress towards something better – the purification of the medium, the essence of the beautiful, the redemption of life through aestheticisation, or whatever else might have served that purpose – artists can no longer fall back on the comforting belief that they are themselves moments in a grand narrative of artistic development. There are today no salons sheltering resentful *refusés* counting on vindication by the future. The fetish of newness, which made innovation itself the marker of the highest aesthetic achievement, lost much of its allure as retro movements of reappropriation and resituation undermined whatever was left of the creative genius as a model for artistic self-description. Even the oxymoronic ‘tradition of the new’, as it was once called by Harold Rosenberg, has come undone.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, with the growth of more ephemeral art practices – installations, performance art, auto-destructive art, site-specific art, netart and so on – the historical aura surrounding objects themselves, so long a staple of aesthetic value, was at least in part eroded. The sedimented experience embodied in the unique object with all its belonging to specific collections and owners, all its physical weathering and restorations, lost much its importance with technologically reproduced art and art designed to be ephemeral events rather than eternal objects (although, to be sure, such objects still command enormous respect in both the cultural and economic marketplace). Now when tableaux return they are likely to appear in videos like the slow-motion works of Bill Viola, rather than in paintings hanging in museums or collectors’ homes.

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12 For examples of its survival in these ways in the transitional period away from Communism, see Ales Erjavec, ed., *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition: Politicized Art under Late Socialism* (Berkeley, 2003).

13 For a recent discussion, see Hans Belting, *Art History after Modernism*, trans. Caroline Saltzweid, Mitch Cohen and Kenneth Northcott (Chicago, 2003).

14 Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* (New York, 1959).

How then, we might ask, does history manifest itself in the work of contemporary artists, who have left behind modernist formalism and yet resisted any temptation to return to history painting as it was traditionally manifested? If totalising, coherent meta-narratives are now impossible, as Jean-François Lyotard famously claimed in his account of postmodernism a generation ago,<sup>15</sup> are visual representations of the past equally bereft of the orienting principles that allowed their predecessors to function as moments of condensed meaning in an implied developmental story? If the choice between a continuation of such conventional historical narratives and the absolute synchronisation of all values sometimes known as '*posthistoire*'<sup>16</sup> is inadequate, what is then left? There is, of course, no single answer to this question, but the works collected in the forthcoming exhibition curated by Nato Thompson at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASSMoCA) called 'A Historic Occasion: The Uses of History' help us to see possible alternatives. They present imaginative experiments in the use of history – or perhaps better put, 'history' – in contemporary artistic production.

The need for scary quotes around the term is apparent, if we register the extent to which reflexivity about traditional modes of historical research and representation is evident in the work. Take, for example, the perennial issue of re-experiencing or re-enacting the past, which theoretically astute historians like Wilhelm Dilthey and R.G. Collingwood spent so much time worrying about.<sup>17</sup> These historians described their task as imaginative empathy with the subjective interiority of those who were considered the actors of history. Whether understood in holistic terms as encompassing the full range of emotions of those actors, or more narrowly as re-enacting their putatively rational judgments and motivations, re-experiencing was premised on two problematic assumptions. The first involved the paradoxical assumption of commensurability between present consciousness, that of the historian, and past consciousness, that of the historical actors, which suggested the very transcendental, ahistorical mind that historical sensitivity had called into question. That is, it assumed that there was no meaningful difference between, say, a 21st-century white American male and the 10th-century Chinese peasant woman whose experience he was trying empathetically to recapture. The radical otherness of the past was thus forgotten in the attempt to make it come alive today. And secondly, the focus on actors in the past, however one tried to recapture their consciousness, lost sight of the fact that history is often made against the will and behind the backs of actors who never fully experienced what posterity can now see as the main structural or long-term trends of the eras in which they lived. The well-known cartoon showing the man running through the streets of a medieval town shouting the impossible warning: 'The Hundred Years War has broken out! The Hundred Years War has broken out!' cleverly makes this point. That is, there is no totalising vantage point from which one can both act in history and write its post facto narrative, a narrative, moreover, which can never reach its final closure.

What is problematic for professional historians may, however, provide suggestive

15 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans., Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1984).

16 Lutz Niethammer, *Posthistoire: Has History Come to an End?*, trans. Patrick Camiller (New York, 1992).

17 For an account of their work, see Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern European and American Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley, 2004), chapter 5.

stimulation for artists grappling with the ways in which history, however we understand it, refuses to release its grip on us.<sup>18</sup> Historical re-enactments, often of great battles, have been popular entertainments for some time, but normally scorned as kitsch, allowing weekend warriors to prance around in period costumes, or at best as lower-level vernacular art by more critically minded cultural observers. Several of the artists in this show, however, have decided to stage re-enactments of a sort themselves. The American Allison Smith draws on the robust tradition of Civil War re-enactments in a work called 'The Muster', which brought together contemporary artists to Governors Island in New York's East River to create an installation of sculptures and artifacts – 'trench art' – evoking the era, although in poses and postures that work to undermine the heroic reading of the war. The German artist Felix Gmelin re-enacts a scene from the student movement in 1968 Berlin, in which his father was one of several runners carrying a red flag through the streets of the city to a balcony in the City Hall. The second time, however, the running took place in Stockholm and the flag never made it to the balcony, implying the futility of the gesture today. In 2001, the British artist Jeremy Deller produced an even more ambitious re-enactment of an event during the bitter miners' strike that took place in Britain in 1984, which became known as the 'Battle of Orgreave' from the [name of the] Yorkshire village where it took place. Including many actual participants in the original event, which saw government troops violently confronting union strikers, the re-enactment took place in a stadium with rubber bricks substituted for the real thing. Interviews with participants testified to the sense of solidarity it engendered, despite its simulacral status.

Another contributor, the American photographer Greta Prati, provides a meta-level reflection on re-enactments that have already occurred in that culture, giving us images of nineteen impersonators of Abraham Lincoln. Here history as a story of progressive development is replaced by history as repetition and difference. The British video artist Eve Sussman adds further layers of reflexivity by unfreezing a canonical ekphrastic scene from Western art history, Jacques Louis David's *The Rape of the Sabine Women* of 1799, which itself purported to record a historical – or more likely legendary – moment in the founding years of the Roman Republic. As she had done earlier with another celebrated canvas by a Western artistic master, Velázquez's 'Las Meninas' in a short film called '89 Seconds at Alcazar', Sussman dereifies the frozen spectacle, undoing any ideal of a single 'significant moment', and restores temporality to what produced it. 'Raptus', her video of the thirty-minute battle scene she choreographed on the Greek island of Hydra with a group of actors, dancers and musicians called The Rufus Corporation, includes the initial rape and abduction of the Sabine women before they return to make peace between their new Roman husbands and former Sabine menfolk, shown by Jaques Louis David.

Re-enactments of whatever kind, however, can only provide partial and subjective

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18 One example not represented in the show is the work of the African-American performance artist Robbie McCauley, whose *Sally's Rape* is described by critic Rebecca Schneider in the following way: 'On stage, McCauley strips naked and stands on a bench. A white woman, Jeannie Hutchins, tells McCauley's audience that the bench is an auction block and she instructs spectators to join together in the chant "Bid em in, bid em in...Bid em in, bid em in..." As the chanting continues, McCauley becomes her great-great-grandmother in the process of being exchanged among slave holders as a piece of property. The link between race, gender and commodification could not be more blatant. The scene is simple and straightforward and devastating....The subtitle of *Sally's Rape* is telling: *The Whole Story – The Past Becomes the Present in this Portrait of Survival within Today's Plantation Culture. The Explicit Body in Performance* (New York, 1997), p. 174.



entry into the past, no matter how brilliantly imagined the empathetic re-experiencing of what is purported to have happened before. There are, as mentioned above, longer-term trends that no one personally could have experienced in their entirety when they were occurring. Historians therefore have had to resort to perspectives from above, less intimate panoramic surveys of a landscape from afar. Certain artists concerned with the relevance of history have also been drawn to this dimension of historical reconstruction, one which understands that patterns, if they exist at all, can only be seen from a distance and not experienced by participants first-hand. Trevor Paglan, a geographer turned artist who had earlier mapped the prison system in the state of California from above in 'Recording Carceral Landscapes', now focuses on an even more hidden historical map, that of the 'black world' of classified installations created by the Pentagon during the Cold War. 'The Secret Bases' gives us an especially powerful insight into the disconnection between everyday experience and the occulted forces of history by choosing intentionally hidden features of the Cold War era, which only reveal themselves, if at all, to a surveillance camera high above them. Here aesthetic experience in the present deliberately severs any ties with re-enactments of the experience of past actors. A similar absence is registered in the work of the Bosnian artist Nebojsa Seric-Shoba, who photographs the scenes of past historical events, like Verdun or Auschwitz, where no visible trace of the horrible slaughters that occurred there can be directly seen, but whose names still conjure up the ghosts of their victims. Yet another strategy employed by artists in the exhibition to allow the intrusion of history into the present involves the direct use of material objects from the past, but objects robbed of their numinous aura. Like the debris that is available to be reconfigured in a new amalgam, as Walter Benjamin famously argued in his discussion of dialectical images, they operate through juxtaposition to create new constellations of meaning. Whether it is the vinyl records melted and refashioned by the American Dario Robleto into soldier's boots, or the pseudo-African cotton batik material used by the British artist Yinka Shonibare to clothe headless dummies in 'Scramble for Africa', or figures in a filmed version of the assassination of the Swedish king in the 1790s called 'Masked Ball', or the Colombian artist Doris Salcedo's furniture sculptures filled with concrete made from personal effects of victims of her country's civil war, the litter of the past is given new resonance by artists sensitive to the historical energies still latent in them.

In a recent article in the journal *History and Theory*, the Dutch philosopher of history Eelco Runia has suggested that rather than stressing the metaphoric emplotment of the past as meaningful by contemporary historians, in the manner of Hayden White, it might be more fruitful to concentrate on the metonymic presence of residues of the past instead.<sup>19</sup> That is, history can let us get in touch with realities left by past generations, which are discontinuous with our own lives, unassimilable to our own narratives. They are metonyms because they involve a substitution of an attribute or adjunct for the larger thing itself, a kind of deliberately inappropriate displacement of a word from one context to another (for example, the proper name of an author for his oeuvre as in the sentence, 'What we find in Tolstoy is a panorama of Russian life' or a place for a person as in 'The White House told still more lies.') Sudden appearances of objects from the past serve this function in opening up an entire lost world.

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19 Eelco Runia, 'Presence', *History and Theory*, 45 (February, 2006).

What Runia calls the ‘presence in absence’ of these historical artifacts produces a spatial rather than temporal effect, one in which the two moments exist for us now, but without any integration. It brings about a transfer of presence more than a transfer of meaning.

Interestingly, he cites the novels of W.G. Sebald, such as *Austerlitz* and *Vertigo*, in which the journey of the main character is like a walk through a mapped landscape, where each location speaks of the past.<sup>20</sup> What is of particular interest for our own purposes is Runia’s observation that historical metonymies need not always be verbal, but can be visual as well. ‘Curious specimens of non-verbal metonymies in a linguistic context,’ he writes, ‘are the illustrations in the novels of Sebald. These illustrations – in *Austerlitz* only photographs, in *Vertigo* also train tickets, receipts, postcards, advertisements, and so on – function as fistulae or holes through which the past discharges into the present.’<sup>21</sup> He then adds, citing the insights of the critic Heiner Boehncke, ‘that each individual hole is what Roland Barthes has called a “punctum” (a snip, a little blemish, a pinhole) —and indeed, Sebald’s illustrations are a kind of “leak” in time through which “presence” wells up from the past into the present.’<sup>22</sup> Working with comparable fossils or relics from their own countries’ history, artists like Robleto, Shinobare or Salcedo give us what Sebald calls ‘“kernels of reality”’ surrounded by expanses of nothingness.<sup>23</sup> They provide metonymic presences of absent past realities that are never recuperable into metaphorically meaningful, emplotted narratives with a beginning, middle and end. As placeholders of a strange and discontinuous past, out of place in our own current world, stowaways in a journey that never arrives home, they are the opposite of the allegorical history paintings of the past, replete with resonant meaning. They are what might be called anti-ekphrastic exercises in which there is no high point in a narrative, no *beau ideal*, that can be visually rendered for the edification of the viewer. Interestingly, Christopher Prendergast sees the tendency to replace metaphoric by metonymic modes of presentation already a symptom of the crisis of legitimisation of history painting brewing in the Napoleonic era.<sup>24</sup> In the work in the MASSMoCa show, the process of replacement is complete.

Indeed, if one tries to fit all these versions of historical and aesthetic experience together, they defy coherence and totalisation. Rather than reducing events to moments in a meaningful story, the works in this show register the ways in which events resist complete contextualisation. They turn away from any emblematic moment of heightened significance comparable to ekphrastic description in literature. In this sense, they bear witness to the collapse of the traditional notion of history, including art history, emplotted in a narrative, developmental mode. Or rather, since the term ‘collapse’ suggests precisely an endpoint that tacitly restores linear narrativity, they paradoxically testify to the persistence of what they appear to overcome, but a persistence with a difference. For rather than being reduced to mere entries in a

20 W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. Anthea Bell (London, 2001).

21 Runia, ‘Presence’, p. 16.

22 *Ibid*,

23 *Ibid*.

24 Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting*, p. 70, where he writes ‘Lost in “detail”, they had started to become essentially metonymic forms of representation, whereas for Quatremère history painting was a “metaphoric” art, where metaphor meant not a mimesis of surface of resemblances, but a meta-phor as “transport”, a carrying across (or perhaps, more accurately, an elevation) from the empirical to the abstract.’



simultaneous archive that functions like an internet with only associative links serving as the principle of infinite connectivity, they are more like shards of a past that is not the same as the present and constantly reminds us of that difference.<sup>25</sup> ‘Historical experience’ in this sense is the experience of the radical otherness of what happened before in an elsewhere and else-when that refuses to be assimilated into an historicist flow of development or succumb to the cultural meat-grinder of an eternal now.

**Manuel Borja-Villel** Martin has just developed a very important idea: the reconstruction of history based on visual elements, at a time in which the past seems to be infinitely available. I believe his intervention poses several questions, so we will open up the discussion to the audience.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** I found the address interesting. I would like to know how you would include Gerhard Richter in this discussion, as I see that there is a certain gap among the more contemporary young people and the Richter generation in Germany regarding German history.

**Martin Jay** This is a suggestive question. In fact, Richter has been mentioned on other occasions on which I have presented this thesis, so it is quite clear that people think of Richter as a painter who also introduces moments or historical data in his work in an enigmatic way. In particular, his series on the Baader-Meinhof, people usually understand this as a moment that... um... it is very difficult to understand according to Richter’s own answer. Is it a celebration, is it a matter of using something in a political context because of its aesthetic effect? I believe there are interpretations, but I have not been able to find any that achieves any sort of consensus. I believe that Richter is an artist, he is not ahistorical, obviously he is not a formalist. He does not work on the differences in history but rather history itself is decontextualised and, that at least, does not seem to be allegorical to me. It does not seem to me that there is any remnant of narration in the painting, of previous history. So I would perceive this in another way, in the way that contemporary artists are forced to think historically. In other words: they are forced to acknowledge that they are within history, that they are relating with a recent past that perhaps they themselves will experience one day, in a certain way. Richter... I am not sure what the exact date is, but he was an adult at the time the Baader-Meinhof events took place. There are artists who in one way or another are attempting to incorporate scraps of the past in their works; however, the success this may have depends, I suppose, on what one expects from it. I believe this work situates us face to face with events whose nature has not enabled them to be completely absorbed in our historic conscious in a simple way. They are still problematic, they are events that are connected with terrorism that takes place in other contexts today, above all those we all feel so insecure about, so incapable of explaining as it is so difficult to find a sense to them. So, due to this, I believe there is a moment in which art has a sort of directness, but it is also an art that contains historic references and a sense of distance at the same time. I am not sure that this is a very coherent answer, but I believe that Richter would be another type of contemporary artist who feels he cannot avoid recent history he himself expe-

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25 For a recent rumination on this dimension of historical experience, see F.R. Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience (Cultural Memory in the Present)* (Stanford, Ca., 2005).

rienced, but at the same time cannot absorb it in a contextual narration that simply grants it a meaning and a sense that are easy to assimilate. So I think this is indigestible, the mystery of the sinister, of this use of history that also derives from his work. Would you agree? Because I am also interested in why people always mention Richter in this debate.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** I don't want to monopolise the debate but I would also like to ask you if you too feel that sometimes there is a void between the absence of a theory of history in artists and their pressing need to show history. In what way does this affect real results?

**Martin Jay** Well, I believe that the philosophy or the theory of art is something that practising historians rarely, in a conscious way, incorporate in their work. What I mean is that this rides over them, it is something that occasional philosophers or historians do such as Hayden White, who I mentioned in the talk, or people such as Frank Ankersmit. There are people who are philosophers of history and practicing historians, but frequently there is a great distance between the two. However, practising historians are commonly very conservative in the way they present their work. In general, they follow the realistic fictional model of the nineteenth century, established by Walter Scott, Balzac and other novelists of the turn of the century. The artists, and this is the argument I was suggesting at the beginning of my talk, are much more adventurous, more creative, more preoccupied with such genres, the genres of the nineteenth century and their ways of representing history on the canvas. Thus, in a certain way, the artists are practising historians, as I am myself, which indicates where we, as historians, perhaps are forced or obliged to go in the future. We learn from the artists who are playing with history in a way that most historians, practising narrative historians, are not yet capable of doing. So I think that there is a disconnection that is interesting between the practice of written history and the practice of history as it is represented in the world of contemporary art. In both cases there is also a disconnection with the philosophy of history, which attempts to offer large-scale explanations both on the narration of history and on the method of telling the story. The philosophy of history deals with these two levels. Thus, there is a three-party discussion going on between philosophers, practising historians and artists who deal with history in a complicated way.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** I would like to go back to your opinion on the relationship between history and public memory. I would say that history comes more through the filter of scholars, and I think that public memory is more connected to daily living and social implications. I believe your position is much closer to history. I would like to ask you how you consider public memory.

**Martin Jay** Well, you are opening up a very, let us say you are opening a can of worms, if I may use that metaphor. A can of worms that many contemporary historians have been trying to equip with meaning. There is even a magazine called *History and Memory* which attempts to bring a meaning to the dialogue between the sometimes called 'memorial makers' and historians. Memorial makers are the people who spend most of the time talking about memory, with Pierre Nora being an excel-

lent example in France with his series *Lieux de la Mémoire*. However, historians are very sceptical about public memory. They are conscious of the fact that it is created, construed and mobilised, that also at times it is ideological, selective and even debatable for various reasons. Also quite frequently it is difficult to criticise, I mean that collective memory is a very complicated phenomenon. Individual memory, collective memory, national memory... all these are very debatable territories. Most professional historians attempt to consider memory in a complex way, but also become distant from it, not taking up testimony or their presence as if it were the last word in a historical event, but rather they also try to see in documents and various things that the witnesses cannot vouch for. I think it is true that numerous artists establish a dialogue not only with history but also with memory, and I think that this is clear when artists are encouraged to produce monuments of public memory for public consumption. The attempt made by Maya Lin to execute a memorial of Vietnam for instance, is an excellent case of a renowned artist facing this. All those memorials and monuments of the Holocaust that are being built in Europe, in the United States and virtually anywhere, perhaps not in Iran, but in fact any other place on Earth today. Thus there are other worlds, numerous places in which the artists are the depositories of the memory, they are really the people who help keep memories alive and also maintain a certain critical distance from it, and are not happy with official memory and attempt to make us remember on different levels. I think that some of the artists present in the exhibition I alluded to are a good example of this, such as re-stagings of Abraham Lincoln. In the United States Lincoln is a canonical figure, still very revered, still an important landmark for good politics. And, however, there exists a large amount of kitsch and reproductions of Lincoln, a way in which Lincoln is part of our popular culture, and artists deal with this, let us say, selective memory of Lincoln in complex ways. Thus I think you are absolutely right, if we were to carry out a series of lectures to expand this debate, we could add the theory of history and historical analysis that artists do, but also popular memory and the work of the so-called memorial makers, people who write about popular memory, and the debate among historians and those who write about popular memory. These are the ways in which the past calls out to us, a call that is in no way simple and that we all try to understand.

I would also add a note concerning historical-artistic narration of the past, in which museums carry out a crucial role. I mean: there are history courses of art, there are books... but museums are the places in which contact can be made with the objects in a coherent and meaningful way. They are places for incredible experimenting on how to juxtapose, reorganise, re-tell, avoid or not build a story that surpasses the ability of the object to speak out to us without such a story, and transcend or not the object of this narration... all are subjects which museums confront in an extraordinarily interesting way. It is a great challenge to try to avoid the more traditional narrations of the nineteenth century of national development or the internal narration of art, or the development of style or a certain type of *telos*. I think museums today are deeply committed to clarifying how the narrations were not sequential, how there are alternative ways of organising the past that they preserve. We are the possessors of the past from which there is so much to be learnt.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** But, if I am not speaking too much, I would like to introduce something arising from the previous point, as I sometimes believe we are debating

the history as memory, as past. What happens with those artists who consider history as a present, who wish to be subjects of history, who want to make history? I would use as an example your series of images, which is that of Doris Salcedo. I disagree a little with your interpretation of her work, because I believe she lives more within the general violence of Colombian society and is not blaming anyone specifically, not even the army, but this culture of violence. Afterwards I'd like to bring to the fore someone from your society: Andy Warhol, *The Man right to...*; from Spain I would mention Equipo Crónica: the image of Franco dressed as a flamenco dancer; and Brazil, two examples as I am Brazilian: one, Cildo Meireles, with his work with the natives and the other, *Cara de Caballo* by Helio Oiticica, which deals with the subject of urban violence as a sort of reaction during the dictatorship. How would you separate the memory of the artists who think of history as an ongoing process and wish to be agents of history in the present?

**Martin Jay** That is an excellent argument. Talking in general terms, there are two ways of considering the connexion between art and history. One is to state that history is living and is meaningful for us, who are its product, part of the continuum, and that we must capture this moment as historic. Some philosophers such as Lukács, for example, were inclined to consider that the present is history and that we could make history, but also be its result or its victims. Thus, an artist who wishes to make us conscious of the fact that we have a possibility of making a different future, will attempt to alert us that we make history instead of being its passive victims. There is a very powerful imperative in English that connects memory that is living with a future, which is our future, the future of people we care about, our children, that situates us in the flow of history and makes us want to change things. There exists another vision of history that is very different, and I think that some of the works I have talked about reveal this perfectly. This vision emphasises what a historian such as David Candor wrote: 'The past is another country.' It means that the past is different, not completely continuing from us. This was the argument that was defended when talking about an American trying to penetrate the minds of women of tenth-century China. That is not my mind and it is this otherness, the radical difference, the fact that human culture is so wide, which implies that it is not something that I can immediately absorb, domesticate, make mine, become familiar with, make it, in some way, re-interpretable on my own terms. There is an encounter with radical otherness, so one of the reasons we study a remote past is not our lives. It is precisely to come out of ourselves, not to centre ourselves on who we are, where we are going and how indebted we are to the past, but rather to see the sense of how things are completely different, will never be something we can relate to, and yet they are part of human history, part of the past in the most ample way of culture and human events in totally different ways. There is always this battle between familiarity, domestication, making our own, re-interpreting on our own terms and being hit at the same time by that which is radically impossible, that which is extremely different, completely ineffable, that is that otherness of the past, and it is this drive, which is also very powerful, the reason I can't understand why a passive woman in China of the tenth-century behaved the way she did. Those were her beliefs and they are not beliefs that I can uphold, so there is this sort of marvel we experience in this radical otherness, and that is a very different drive. I think that perhaps it is a combination of both that is on the

table: the consciousness of continuity but also the consciousness of the strangeness, the difference in this continuity, which history brings to us.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** I think the example you mention could only take place in the United States, the example of considering the past as a different country, given that in political sciences in the United States, common man generally does not have a concept of State, the United States as a State. The general opinion is that it is divided into different governments and administrations. So the Bush administration is responsible for Iraq, but not the United States. This grants social and political irresponsibility to the social and political structure itself, because there is always someone to blame for the past. Once you choose another person, his responsibility is entirely erased and for this reason the United States is different countries and moments in time, because each administration is separate from the other and this affects historic continuity of the United States as such. This is my very empirical observation.

**Audience** I would like to add a consideration to the last question, as the statement in your speech gives the impression that when we are talking about history in a museum it is as if the museum suffered a continuous jet-lag syndrome. As if it were always arriving late to events of the past, in such a way that the only way to rescue them is by means of a representation, which is also necessary, because we know there are events that have taken place and that if there is no image of them we would not be able to deal with them in the public sphere. Then, let us say that the work of history is justified in this sort of equation, rescuing of events of the past. But on the other hand, if we also deal a little with what has been happening in recent years and, above all, what is happening in the field of vision and its circulation, we see on many occasions that when an event takes place, let us say that the representation of that event is brought about by those who are producing it. We have reached a point where the actors of the event, those who represent it and those who distribute it, are the same. The epitome of this would be the images of Abu Ghraib; in other words, I produce the event, document it and place it in circulation. What I want to say is that as the object of discussion during the next few days is going to be the museum, I think that what is most needed is more than a notion of history that re-thinks different causalities of the event, what is really needed is a new theory of the event, which alludes to us not waiting for something to happen but rather make it happen, us creating the event. I think that this is particularly a crisis which the museum is attempting to withstand as best it can, and the popularity of documentary practices and their penetration in museum spaces, in which the event used to receive a more metaphorical and allegorical representation, is a perfect example. I would like you to debate this double train of work that would be either to re-think history or re-think the theory of events, which I think would be a different matter.

**Martin Jay** That is an important question. I think that up till now power has been centred in the hands of just a few. Virtually this has been so throughout the history of humanity. Those who wield the power of making images and making images circulate, have the power to create, let us say, a documentary recording of

significant events. In such a way, a king displaying his coronation or a great battle or a general about to be surrendered to or whatever were to be the moment that is documented, could also of course be duplicated through other means, recorded, etc. But in general it was mostly done by images. The only example that comes to my mind is the minting of coins in which the effigy of the king was on a coin. It is significant that, for example, Louis XVI was known to be fleeing to Valence in 1790 because someone recognised his image from a coin, thus it is a case in which the toppling of a king was due to his image circulating too much. Now in current times, we have the so-called democratisation of the production of documentary images, so Abu Ghraib was done by a group of kids with the cameras of their mobile phones. Now it is possible to capture images virtually anywhere without anyone censoring them or being capable of restricting them, and immediately afterwards send them through the Internet and have them available to the whole world. In this way what we have is an expansion of the democratic capacity to document. However, what we also have is a new crisis of the allegorical moment. I mean, as long as there is this balance between documentation of the events and the allegorical elevation of them. Thus, all those historic coronations, battle scenes and surrenders had powerful allegorical moments of meaning. In modern documentation the meaning is much less obvious, if it even exists at all. The meaning at times is very much in dispute. A recent example of this was the tapes of Rodney King, the beating of the black victim by the Los Angeles police officers in 1991: a real event, Rodney King being attacked by the law. Now in court, the policemen's defence was able to put this into doubt by contesting the truthfulness of the video tape that registered the event. The defence was able to make it meaningless, subtracting the meaning, even the direct empirical meaning, not to mention the allegorical meaning of the black man being beaten by white authority. The policemen were able to go free. So it is an incredible moment in which the context was revalidated and the narrative re-interpretation imposed itself on eyewitness evidence, the evidence of the documentary.

So I think that the documentary is as you said, ubiquitous, and museums as well as artists have to deal with the event of documentaries around them, such as the paintings by Richter and his work with real images. And we also have September 11, which was the most observed event in the entire history of humanity while it was happening, because there was this delay in the falling of the second tower and people switching on their television sets around the world and seeing this happen in reality and then once again and again, loop after loop, in different versions. And now there are artistic versions, films and the rest. People still have not been able to use this in the way that Richter used Baader-Meinhoff or Andy Warhol's use of images of car accidents and the rest. Not yet, but it will be possible, obviously. Thus, there is a type of gap in this sense. I agree that museums and the art world in general are destined to take into account the sliding towards the current between document and created image, between what is recorded and what is created, between those who attempt to do it and those who attempt to appropriate it. I would say that those who do it do not have the power to control it; once the images are in the public domain, they are available for re-contextualisation, re-juxtapositioning, re-interpretation. Nobody owns the images, not even those who create them. So there is a sort of similar process to that of mounting and re-appropriating, which creates infinite possibilities for re-interpretation, even when the documents apparently seem to tell us what 'really happened'.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** Do you believe September 11 changed the meaning of the paintings of Baader-Meinhof by Gerhard Richter? Because in a certain way you could think along the lines of the relationship of German society with the group, but you could also think that this corresponds to the death of utopia, the guerrilla or whatever you want to call it. I mean, there was a concrete political idea that could still be justified. But do you think that the September 11 attacks remove power from the content of the Baader-Meinhof work?

**Martin Jay** Well, I don't know if we yet really know what September 11 means. The meaning is still exfoliating in very different ways. Probably there will be another September 11, another mega-event, another terrorist act, with nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, the probability is very high at least. We know of course, what happened in Spain, England and other places, but not on such a scale. So September 11 is perhaps the beginning of a series. I hope I am wrong, but I am afraid I'm not. The meaning still needs to be understood. One of the meanings is a certain radical twist, abandoning the discourse of the end of the twentieth century on cultural subversion in terrorism as if it were harmless, as if it were always trying to destroy the evil State and at the service of some type of progressive alternative. After September 11 this type of narrative was shaken, and we are still battling to imagine a world that is not clearly organised between the bad guys and the good guys. We precisely ignore what will be the meaning of acts of this type because there are numerous unforeseen consequences that take place which the perpetrators, and even those who used the act initially for a certain proposal, cannot dominate entirely. So we are in a world of obvious chaos and risks, a world in which stories such as end of the Cold War, the conflict between civilisations, between Islam and the West, etc., are very weak excuses for the way in which historians in one hundred or two hundred years from now will feature our era, which is an era, it seems to me, of confusion over the direction and side we are on in a bunch of battles that do not seem to have any obvious side to lean to. So I think it is, quite frankly, a very complicated moment. But these are great metaphysical matters, beyond the scope of this humble talk.

**Nuria Enguita Mayo** I believe the artistic practice is not so much recovering history but rather incorporating it, to be able to incorporate history in a cultural and artistic practice and in turn do it in a critical way. In other words, I do believe that the document is essential for reconstruction, in the sense that history does not tell us how the events took place, but is rather a narrative as you have quite correctly stated, and therefore it includes, and has to include, fiction. But how to incorporate the present in history seems to me to be the important thing, and I believe that there are contemporary artists who do not work in such literal terms, I would say, as some of the examples you have shown us. I think there are three types of re-incorporation of history, as you have said, and for me the most interesting one is the second type, the one that works on structures that come from history, that delimit a territory and define a present. These are the structures of the Cold War, the map of those territories you talked about. For me the interesting thing would be how to incorporate what comes to us in the form of a document, either textual, architectural or another type. Carles Guerra started an extremely interesting debate: one about how to state history in a moment of strong acceleration, when besides this I think we are returning in a bad



way to the dominance of vision. In other words, we have frequently seen the falling of the Twin Towers, but we don't know anything about it. I believe as well, as Jean-François Chevrier wrote, that it is necessary to distinguish between the true document and the direct and rapid testimony of the communications media, testimonies that are all the same, in which the event taking place is not important.

**Martin Jay** Thank you for the question, as it centres around one of the main themes of the talk, which is the limits of incorporation and incarnation as a goal. The implications of 'incorporation' go in the sense that we introduce something into a body, such as the typically religious version of 'incarnating the Word in the body'. The idea that it is something foreign, external and transcendental, or immanent, that becomes part of a meaningful corpus and we also use it as a metaphor for a set of a work that has a certain type of coherence.

However, the thesis that those artists uphold is not a meaningful corpus, that can be incorporated, domesticated, in a certain sense, and give meaning to things that seem strange... these artists remain on a level of strangeness that cannot be incorporated. I have mentioned a book, a footnote by Frank Ankersmit, the Dutch philosopher of history, on the notion of the sublime in historic experience, which also captures this. The sublime as opposed to beauty, which basically alludes to that which cannot be represented, to that which cannot be had in a significant manifestation, beautiful and elevating, but which always points to something that is ineffable, too big, too grandiose or infinite. Just simply beyond our ability to reason about it, beyond our ability to show it, beyond our ability to illustrate it, beyond our ability to make it ours. What, then, are these artists trying to do? I think it is putting us in touch with the fact that history has such moments. I think of, in my own lifetime, something such as the magnicide of Kennedy, that will never be solved, about which we will never know the truth, you know? And that is terrible. I grew up in a time when it was important to know if Oswald assassinated Kennedy. Lots of people didn't believe he did, but we don't have any other answer. There are other mysteries... In a certain way, history is a place where we fight for coherence, sense and meaning. Artists help us in this task. But at the same time it is also a place where we are in touch with something that challenges all of that. I believe today we live in a period when the attempts to transform everything into something coherent are very problematic. We can't do it, even if we see, for example, the attempt by the Bush administration to create a single story of good guys and bad guys, a narration of liberation. I mean, all the things we considered as balanced ways of interpreting the world, such as that democracy is a positive thing and the rest, all seem to have lost their ability to structure a world that revolves in ways we cannot completely understand. So the way to be faithful to this, and not repress or domesticate it, is to permit the presence of chaos in the work, permit something of the sinister and the sublime. And I believe that artists are eager to do this. And in this sense, the minds of some historians still attempt to fight for this narrative way and this coherence, bringing meaning and generating contextual sense by using the scraps of history.



LYGIA CLARK SUGGESTS:  
AVOID FALSE PROBLEMS  
SUELY ROLNIK

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*At the very moment when he digests the object, the artist is digested by society, which has already found him a title and a role in bureaucracy: he will be the engineer of future leisure, an activity that does nothing to affect the balance of social structures.*  
Lygia Clark, Paris, 1969<sup>26</sup>

The double vocation of the museological space – privileged site for the exhibition of the products of artistic creation, on the one hand, and for their preservation and transmission by means of the constitution of collections, on the other – finds itself under fire today once again. It is true that these attacks on the institution are older than this. In the 1960s, for instance, artists focused their research on the power that museums brought to bear on their works; this is also the power of all the elements that make up the so-called ‘art system’ – from the process of determining means and genres to the production of categories whereby the (official) history of art evaluates the products of artistic actions. The museum, like all the other elements of this system, would thus tend to kill precisely the poetic life of the piece, from which its power to intervene critically in its context emanates. This kind of interrogation is present at the outset of Lygia Clark’s trajectory in the 1950s and 1960s, when the Brazilian artist dedicated herself to painting and sculpture.

At the end of the 1970s, a new embarrassment for artistic production was introduced: the media-market was introduced into this terrain, in which it became fully installed in the course of the 1980s, with the consolidation of the international hegemony of finance capitalism. As we know, neoliberalism is characterised by the instrumental empowering of the forces of knowledge and creation in the service of the market, to the point where it has been qualified by some researchers as ‘cultural’ or ‘cognitive’ capitalism.<sup>27</sup> Such forces have come to occupy the heart of the economic surplus machinery, be it directly, as labour, or indirectly, as a way of adding ‘artistic’ value to the logos associated with banks, companies and even cities, with the purpose of increasing their seductive power (and, consequently, their commercial power). The regime thus tends to numb the relation of our senses to the otherness of the world and imprison it in the eye of what is visible (a machine that manages to grind even the critical force

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26 ‘L’homme structure vivante d’une architecture biologique et cellulaire’. In: *Robho*, n. 5-6, Paris, 1971 (facsimile of the journal available in: *Lygia Clark, de l’oeuvre à l’événement. Nous sommes le moule, à vous de donner o souffle*, exhibition catalogue, Suely Rolnik & Corinne Diserens (Eds.). Nantes: Musée de Beaux-Arts de Nantes, 2005. Brazilian translation: *Lygia Clark, da obra ao acontecimento. Somos o molde, a você cabe o sopra*. São Paulo: Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, 2006 (special supplement with the Brazilian translations of the dossiers on Lygia Clark em *Robho*). Fundació Antoni Tapies, Barcelona, 1997, pp. 247-248.

27 The notions of ‘cognitive’ or ‘cultural capitalism’, proposed chiefly by researchers associated to the French magazine *Multitudes* from the 1990s onwards, are in part unfoldings of the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari regarding the status of culture and subjectivity under the advanced capitalistic regime. In recent essays, I have developed this notion from the perspective of subjectification processes, specially the politics of creation and relationship with the other. Cf.: ‘Geopolítica da cafetinagem’ / ‘The geopolitics of pimping’. In: *Rizoma.net*, electronic magazine; *Documenta 12 Magazine Project*, 2006; ‘Geopolitik der Zuhälterei’ / ‘The geopolitics of pimping [meaning? Zuhalten is to keep closed]’, in *Transform.eipcp.net/Transversal* ‘subjectivities and machines’, 10/2006.

of works such as Clark's and Helio Oiticica's, even if their work is not reduced to objects; yet the archives of these artistic practices have not been turned into fetishes and converted into luxury products, destined to sate temporarily the implacable voracity of the market).

It is exactly in order to confront this power that took over the institutional art circuit that many artists belonging to the generation that became consolidated from the second half of the 1990s have chosen to distance themselves from that particular terrain – this time in a wide collective movement whose questions and strategies are conceived in the light of the problems raised by the new regime.<sup>28</sup> In the majority of cases the intention of these drifts is not to abandon art, but rather to find exile away from its instituted 'system'. What many of these artists seek – as those of the 1960s sought – is to secure critical breathing of their work, usually suffocated in the mundane halls of institutional spaces devoted to artistic production. Lygia Clark's quote that opens this essay is proof of the artist's acute lucidity regarding the new regime, as early as 1969, when it was just barely visible on the horizon.

This artist, a project I developed from 2002 to 2008 to build a record of her work, and an exhibition I organised about her in France and Brazil<sup>29</sup>, will be my starting points to examine the place of the museum in contemporary life.

### *A trajectory towards paradox*

Lygia Clark's career as an artist began in 1947. Her first thirteen years were dedicated to painting and sculpture, areas in which her work soon managed to find a privileged space in the international artistic circuit. Despite the early success, in 1963 the artist's research underwent a radically innovative turn that was to prove itself irreversible, shifting towards the creation of proposals that depended on the processes that they mobilised in the body of the participants as a precondition of their realisation. But what exactly did such proposals consist of?

Lygia Clark's experimental practices are generally understood as multisensorial experiments, whose importance would lie in overcoming the reduction of artistic investigation to the field of the gaze. This kind of interpretation may be valid for many of the 'sensorial experiments' and practices of 'corporeal expression' that were current in the 1960s and 1970s, but it is certainly inadequate for the proposals of this artist, because they implied problems of a different nature. If exploring all senses was an issue of the time, of which Lygia Clark certainly partook, this artist's work went much further:

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28 I refer here to the proliferation of art groups which has taken place in several cities in Brazil in recent years. Contra Filé, Bijari, Cia Cachorra, Catadores de Histórias, c.o.b.a.i.a., A revolução não será televisionada, TrancaRua, Frente 3 Fevereiro... are some of those groups in São Paulo. In common with similar groups all over Latin America, they share a progressive connection with social and political local movements (for instance the Movimento Sem Teto do Centro, Homeless Movement of Central São Paulo). To name only some of the most 'visible' and 'institutional' moments of the articulation of this international network of collectives we could mention the exhibition *Kollektive Kreativität* in Kassel, organised by the Zagreb What collective, How & for Whom (WHW) ([http://www.fridericianumkassel.de/ausst/ausstkollektiv.html#interfunktio-nen\\_english](http://www.fridericianumkassel.de/ausst/ausstkollektiv.html#interfunktio-nen_english)); the Buenos Aires edition of the project *Ex Argentina*, co-ordinated by the group Etcétera, among others, (<http://www.exargentina.org/participantes.html>); and the exhibition Self-Education at the National Centre for Contemporary Art, Moscow, co-ordinated by Daria Pirkyna and the Saint Petersburg collective Chto Delat? (What is to be done?) (<http://transform.eipcp.net/calendar/1153261452>). About Kollektive Kreativität, WHW, Etcétera, Ex Argentina, Grupo de Arte Callejero (GAC), see *Brumaria*, n. 5, *Arte: la imaginación política radical*, Summer 2005.

29 Musée de Beaux Arts de Nantes, France, 2005; Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Brazil, 2006.

the focus of her research consisted in mobilising the two capacities inherent in each sense and the unavoidable paradox that underlies the relation between the two. I refer to the perception and sensation capacities. The first, which is the one we are most familiar with, allows us to apprehend the otherness of the world as a map of forms upon which we project representations so as to bestow them with sense. The second, which is less well-known to us due to its historical repression, allows us to apprehend the otherness of the world as a diagram of forces. It results from the capacity of each of our sense organs to resonate, to be affected by those forces – either human or not – a capacity, which, as a whole, I have referred to as the *corpo vibrátil*, or ‘resonant body’.<sup>30</sup>

The entities of subject and object exist only in the exercise of perception, which indeed presupposes their existence and maintains them in a relation of exteriority to each other. In the exercise of sensation, however, the other is a plastic multiplicity of forces that pulsate in our sensual texture, thus becoming part of our very selves in a kind of fusion (not metaphorically, but as a process that takes place in our physical reality). These two modes of apprehension of reality, irreducibly paradoxical in their logics as in their dynamics, leave imprints in the body that originate two different forms of memory.

The tension in this paradox is what summons up and lends impetus to creative imagination (in other words, the power of thought). The latter responds to the breakdowns in sense brought about by the inadequacy between, on the one hand, the cartography of forms and representations with its relative stability, and, on the other, the sensual diagram in constant change, the effect of the living presence of otherness that never ceases to affect our bodies. The unease produced by this dissonance puts subjectivity in crisis and imposes upon it the urgency of inventing forms of expression for the sensual mutations that require an output and press for it. This is how new existential territories progressively gain consistency, accompanied by their respective cartographies of sense. In this process there ceases to be both separation and fusion between subjectivity and its others. Instead, becomings of oneself and of the environment are unleashed in singular, non-parallel directions, driven on by the effects of the encounters.<sup>31</sup>

From the beginning of her artistic journey, the focus of Lygia Clark’s research consisted of bringing into the visible the resonant apprehension of the world, as well as its paradox in relation to perception, seeking to affirm the creative imagination that this differential could put into motion, and its transformative effects. This is what she attempted to mobilise in the receivers of her artistic proposals. The work would no longer be interrupted by its actualisation in the spatial finitude of the object; it would now take place as temporality in an experience where the object is unreified so as to become once more a field of living forces that affect the world and are affected by it in turn, generating a process of continuous differentiation. This question could already be found in her pictorial and sculptural strategies. In her pictorial phase, for instance, the break with the frame, revealed in the invis-

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30 ‘Resonating Body’ is a notion I have been working on since 1987, when I suggested it for the first time in my PhD. thesis, published in book format in 1989 *Cartografia Sentimental. Transformações contemporâneas do desejo*. Reissued: Porto Alegre: Sulina, 2006; 3rd edition, 2007.

31 On the double capacity of the sensual and its paradox, as well as its centrality to Lygia Clark’s poetics, cf. Suely Rolnik, ‘D’une cure pour temps dénués de poésie’, in: *Lygia Clark, de l’oeuvre à l’événement. Nous sommes le moule, à vous de donner le souffle*, op. cit., pp. 13-26.

ible face of the two-dimensional plane the forces that animate it. They dissolve the separation between the picture and the wall as it is understood in the visible face of the plane, and enter into composition with the forces of the environment. From this initial gesture, the artist would invent strategies that were more and more effective in embodying the question she pursued. The *Bichos*, with their three-dimensional deployments, were an important moment in that they required the receivers' direct action in order to be carried out; but it was still possible to understand them through perception alone. They could thus remain locked in their condition of objects, separated from the subject that contemplates them, and even from those who manipulate them.<sup>32</sup> After 1963's *Caminhando*<sup>33</sup>, however, the work would no longer exist except in the receiver's experience, outside which the objects become a sort of nothing, resisting in principle any fetishising desire.

The penultimate step was taken in the work developed with her students at the Sorbonne, where the artist taught from 1972 to 1976.<sup>34</sup> It became apparent then that the experience presupposed and mobilised by her objects and *dispositifs* as the condition of their expressivity ran up against certain subjective barriers on the side of participants, which worked as impediments, as well as a source of anguish. These barriers are raised by the phantasmatics inscribed in the body memory, resulting from the traumas experienced in past attempts at establishing this kind of sensual relation with otherness. These attempts would have been inhibited by a lack of reverberation in a surrounding milieu inhospitable to this quality of experience with otherness. The inhibition can be made even worse in dictatorial regimes (like those that ruled Brazil and most of Latin American countries in the 1960s-70s), where this kind of relation becomes an object of humiliation, prohibition or punishment, leaving their toxic marks in the body's memory. Many of Lygia Clark's students at the Sorbonne, with whom I filmed interviews in the context of the project referred to above, testified to this scary aspect of her proposals. At this point the artist becomes aware that the fulfilment of one of the central questions of her artistic research – the reactivation of this quality of aesthetic experience in the receivers of her creations – was not at all self-evident. I refer to the receivers' capacity for letting themselves be affected by the forces

32 On the evolution of Lygia Clark's poetics we focus on here, cf. Suely Rolnik, 'Molding a Contemporary Soul: The Empty-Full of Lygia Clark'. In: Rina Carvajal y Alma Ruiz (Eds.). *The Experimental Exercise of Freedom: Lygia Clark, Gego, Mathias Goeritz, Hélio Oiticica and Mira Schendel*. Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999. pp. 55-108.

33 In 1963, following a study on paper for *O antes é o depois* and *O dentro é o fora*, in which Lygia Clark explores the Möbius strip, she realises that it is in the act of cutting the strip that this space without in- or outside, above or below, right or wrong way round, is revealed; it is in this experience that the work consists, and not the object resulting from it. She then creates *Caminhando*, in which the same experience is offered to one who will definitely now cease to be reduced to the condition of 'spectator' facing a supposedly neutral object in exteriority to him/her. The proposal consists of a strip of whatever paper, a pair of scissors and glue, accompanied by instructions for use: whoever wants to go through it must glue the ends of the strip to each other, to put the inside of one to the outside of the other, producing one single, two-dimensional surface, that is, a Möbius strip; after that, they should choose any point of the strip from where to start a longitudinal cut, taking care to avoid the initial point every time one turn around the surface is completed. The cut then creates spiral, entwined forms, while the strip becomes progressively narrower, until it is impossible to avoid the initial point. At this point, the process is over. The work is realised in the experience each one undergoes of this other time and space as it is revealed through their gesture.

34 Lygia Clark taught at the then recently created U.F.R. d'Arts Plastiques et Science de l'Art de l'Université de Paris I, Sorbonne (a college known as St Charles, after the road where it was located). Imbued with the ideas that oriented the political and socio-cultural movement that exploded in 1968, the college was founded in 1971 as an alternative to the conservative spirit in the teaching of art, until then limited to the Schools of Fine Arts.

of the objects and environments involved in these proposals, and, as a consequence, the capacity for letting themselves be affected by the forces of the objects and environments of their daily life. Lygia Clark thus finds herself facing the urgent need to invent a *dispositif* capable of breaking through the phantasmatic barrier, so as to unclog the pores through which this experience could breathe once more the air of the world. A step beyond was needed: this was how *Structuring the Self*, the parting gesture of her oeuvre, was created.

The new focus of research became the memory of traumas and the fantasies/phantoms they generated, whose mobilisation would now cease to be a mere side-effect of the proposals and come instead to occupy the very nerve centre of her new *dispositif*. Clark sought to explore the power those objects had to bring this memory to the surface and ‘treat it’ (an operation she designated as ‘vomiting the phantasms’). It is therefore the very logic of her artistic investigation that led her to invent this last artistic proposal, to which a deliberately therapeutic dimension was added. The artist received each person individually for one-hour sessions, one to three times a week, over a period of months, and, in certain cases, for more than a year. Her relationship with the receiver, mediated by the objects, had become indispensable for the realisation of the work: it was on the basis of her sensations of the living presence of the other in her own resonant body, in the course of each session, that the artist progressively defined the singular use of the *Relational Objects*, a generic name she had given to objects that had migrated from previous propositions into *Structuring the Self*, or which she created in the specific context of the new *dispositif*. This very quality of openness to the other is what she sought to provoke in those who participated in the work. In this therapeutic-poetic laboratory, the work was carried out in the gradually forming consistency of this quality of the relation to otherness within the subjectivity of its participants.

Seeking this relational quality in her artistic proposals was possibly the way Lygia Clark found to move from the politics of subjectivation marked by an already dominant individualism, as it presented itself – and more and more so – on the terrain of art: the pair formed by the hapless artist in a state of narcissistic delight and the spectator/consumer in a state of sensuous anaesthesia. Maybe this was also the preoccupation that moved the many proposals of ‘participation’ of the spectator and ‘interactivity’ then common in the artistic scene (many of which belonging to the so-called counter-cultural movement). In the correspondence between Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, however, one notices the insistence of both in drawing a clear boundary between their works and other practices of the time that claimed the category of ‘participation’.<sup>35</sup> In this sense, the notion of ‘relational’, the core of the thinking poetics of Lygia Clark’s work could provide us with a lens through which to establish distinctions in such practices. It may nevertheless be more urgent to do that in relation to the mass of apparently similar proposals that proliferate nowadays – be it in the institutional circuit or outside it, or even in its counter-current.

In the context of the institutional circuit, many of the predominant proposals that

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35 In a letter where the question of participation is touched upon, dated May 20th 1969, Oiticica tells his friend: ‘the important thing for you is this discovery of the body (...) not the “participation in a given object”, because this object relation (subject-object) is overcome (...), while the participation problem to a great extent remains within it.’ In: *Lygia Clark. Hélio Oiticica. Cartas 1964-1974*, Luciano Figueiredo (Org.). Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ, 1996; p.115).

have been qualified (and more recently also theorised<sup>36</sup>) as ‘relational’ often reduce themselves to a sterile exercise of entertainment contributing to the neutralisation of the aesthetic experience – the business of *leisure engineers*, to paraphrase Lygia Clark. Looking in 1969 to the place reversed for the artist in a future that has now arrived, Lygia understood the first signs of this ‘trend’ in the context of cognitive capitalism, which expands together with it, in precisely the same rhythm, speed and direction. Such practices invite only the exercise of perception, establishing a relationship of exteriority between the body and the world, where everything stays as it is and attention is kept entertained, immersed in a state of distraction that renders the receiver insensitive to the effects of forces shaking up the environment around it. They therefore constitute the means for the production of an easily instrumentalised subjectivity. This kind of posture will always remain entirely alien to the sphere where everything is de-objectified and the relations between bodies become living – which is a precondition for the fecundity of the encounter with the other that the work of Lygia Clark wanted to mobilise.

On the other hand, in the artistic practices that occur in the movement of drift away from the official circuit – many of which, in Latin America in particular, seek to infiltrate the tensest interstices of the city – the place assigned to the other tends to be of a different nature. In fact, such a drift occurs precisely because of the artists’ refusal to accept the role they are ascribed today in the territory of art, due to the oppression this role implies in the exercise of artistic activity itself, which results from the specific relationship between capital and culture in the present regime. The reason their *dispositifs* are often deployed in urban life or, more widely, public life is that this is the final destination of the inventive force instrumentalised by the market. These two sides of the same problem – external and internal to the circuit – are what often leads to the approximation between the artist and social movements in resistance to the regime’s perversion. In this approximation, the most striking artistic practices tend to be the ones that assert art’s own political power: the piece is created from the experience of the tensions in the artist’s own body, with complicating effects to the existing cartography. They are to be distinguished from propositions that are confused with purely activist practices, vehicles for ‘awareness’ and ideological propaganda, which derive from previously defined representations of reality.

### *Aesthetics, therapeutics and politics: potentials of invention*

In Lygia Clark’s case, this blurring of boundaries was already present very early on in her experimental proposals, developed from the beginning of the 1970s, and particularly in *Structuring the Self*, a work in which the relational arrives at its full realisation and the poetics that traverses and sets in motion the whole of the artist’s oeuvre achieves its highest degree of aesthetic precision and, consequently, critical power. The singular territory the artist had been building step by step throughout her entire trajectory thus arrives at its completion. From the point of view of this unique territory, the controversy regarding where to place it – whether still in art, or already in therapeutics, or on the border between the two or at their point of junction – is shown to be entirely sterile: a false problem, a dead-end. This controversy is, in fact, a way of

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36 See esp. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique Relationnelle*, Presses du Réel, Dijon, France, 2002.



escaping the work that the confrontation with the artist's poetic singularity demands from us, what it opens in our sensibility; and perhaps, even more, a way of avoiding the perturbation of the categories in circulation in the institutional field of both art and therapeutics that this openness would provoke. We need to approach it from the directly opposite angle: one must make the effort to move towards this territory in its radical singularity, where aesthetics and therapeutics reveal themselves as powers of experience, inseparable in their action of interference on subjective and objective reality, powers to be (re)activated.

But there is also a political power that is intrinsic to this work, as essential as the aesthetic and clinical ones, and just as inseparable from them. If we examine the geopolitical horizon in Lygia Clark's career, we realise that the artist introduces the relational in her work first in her collective proposals, elaborated in the post-1968 hangover when, at the outset of her third sojourn in Paris, she catches a glimpse of the arrival of cognitive capitalism, as shown in this text's epigraph.<sup>37</sup> And it is in 1976 that she returns to Rio de Janeiro, at a time when the new regime becomes more clearly established in France; whereas in Brazil the first signs of a movement towards the dissolution of the military dictatorship appear, pushed forward, among other factors, by the needs of the cognitive capitalism that would establish itself in the country some years later. Now, this is exactly the context in which *Structuring the Self* is inscribed, where the relational aspect of her work is distilled and radicalised. As we have seen, this proposal emerged as a subtle act of intervention in the impoverished state of creation and reception of the 'art system', which itself was a symptom of the politics of subjectivation under the new capitalist regime. But it does not stop there: the reactivation of aesthetic experience that these proposals promoted more broadly constituted an act of therapeutic and political resistance in the tissue of social life, going beyond the frontiers of the field of art and thus throwing its supposed autonomy into crisis. Because of this work, her Brazilian 'clients' – as Clark called those who were willing to live out the experience – would probably be better equipped to deal with the toxic effects that the dictatorial power had on their creative power, but also to avoid this force's easy instrumentalisation, at the time when the new regime's perverse power would reactivate it.<sup>38</sup>

This triple potential of Lygia Clark's work – aesthetic, therapeutic and political – is what I wished to reactivate with the project referred to before, in the face of the haze of forgetfulness that surrounds it. But what does 'forgetting' mean in the case of a body of work such as this, which has, on the contrary, been finding increasing celebration in the international art circuit?

37 Lygia Clark lived in France for three periods: from 1950 to 1952, 1964, and from 1968 to 1976.

38 Let us not forget that the instrumentalisation of creative forces operated by cognitive capitalism was even more perverse in countries under dictatorial regimes, since it not only took advantage of the experimental past – especially daring and singular in many of these countries – but also of the scars produced by State terrorism on the forces of creation. The new regime seemed to adopt the forces of creation for their comatose state in order to heal them, inviting them to manifest themselves again with full freedom of expression – with the sole (not at all negligible) condition that this force would be entirely channelled into the market. On this, cf. Suely Rolnik, 'Geopolítica da cafetagem' / "The geopolitics of pimping". In: *Rizoma.net*, op.cit.

## *The work slips away*

In fact, Lygia Clark's proposals that involve the receiver's body were shown for the first time in 1968 at the Venice Biennial, and at the same time the Parisian journal *Robho* dedicated two dossiers of several pages each to them.<sup>39</sup> After this first moment, however, with the exception of an exhibition in 1982 in Rio de Janeiro<sup>40</sup>, a total silence fell over these twenty-six years of experimental investigation. The broader public awareness of this part of the work only began to sketch itself out some ten years after the artist's death, via two parallel initiatives, in 1997 and 1998. I am referring to the small room dedicated to some of these proposals at Documenta X, and above all, to the travelling retrospective of her work organised by the Fondacio Antoni Tapiès.<sup>41</sup> In the latter, the full spectrum of Lygia Clark's work was shown for the first time; until then only her painting and sculpture pieces were known. From that moment on, this part of the work was not only recognised, but celebrated as one of the seminal gestures in contemporary world art. Today the artist's work is included in at least thirty international exhibitions a year, with growing attention being given to the experimental period. Yet the way in which these proposals are usually presented consists simply in exhibiting the objects used in those actions or, even worse, re-enacting those actions before an audience of museum and biennial visitors. Now, these proposals, and *Structuring the Self* in particular, are strictly incompatible with the presence of anybody in the position of a 'spectator', exterior to the work and immune to the experience that it implies and mobilises – not to mention the silence, the temporal continuity and the mute intimacy between resonant bodies, indispensable aspects of the work as such for it to have any chance of fulfilment. In the best of cases, documents of the actions are presented, but these again only allow for these actions to be understood in a fragmentary and merely exterior fashion, devoid of their 'relational' essence. In short, this part of the work was finally put at the public's disposal, but in the form of not much more than its own corpse, completely drained of aesthetic vitality, so as to become one more luxurious delicacy at the banquet of art's instrumentalisation by the market. It is precisely this vitality and its disruptive power that had been thrown into oblivion.

The unease I felt each time I encountered Lygia Clark's work confined to the territory of therapy, or reduced to a fetishised bit of nothing in the territory of art, was what imposed the urgency to invent a strategy that would convey what was at stake in these practices and, thereby, activate the acuteness of the artist's gesture, at the very moment of its neutralising incorporation by the art system. But how to convey a piece of work that is not visible, since it is carried out within the temporality of the effects of the relationship established by each person with the objects that make it up, and with the context given by its *dispositif*? In other words, how to convey a piece of work that

39 *Robho* dedicated a first dossier to Lygia Clark in its first issue in 1968, and a second one in 1971. Cf. note 2, *supra*.

40 The only interruption of this silence during that period took place in 1982, in a exhibition on Oiticica and Clark organised by Luciano Figueiredo and Gloria Ferreira in Rio de Janeiro at the Paço Imperial, including the whole career of both artists. The exhibition took place two years after Helio Oiticica's death.

41 Documenta X was curated by Catherine David, and the retrospective organised and produced by Fundació Antoni Tàpies was conceived by Manuel J. Borja-Villel, at the time the institution's director, in collaboration with Nuria Enguita Mayo, the present director. The exhibition travelled to the following European museums: Réunion des Musées Nationaux/MAC, Galleries Contemporaines des Musées de Marseille (Marseille), Fundação de Serralves (Porto) and Société des Expositions du Palais des Beaux-Arts (Brussels), all in 1998, as well as to Paço Imperial (Rio de Janeiro) in 1999.



is essentially a presentation of an event<sup>42</sup> and which is, as such, by definition ephemeral and at the same time always renewable, ‘made other’? To promote a work of memory by means of interviews recorded on film – such was the path I found towards an answer to these questions.

*The body’s memory: from the object to the event*

The memory I wished to conjure up in these interviews was not of the forms of the actions or of the *dispositifs* and objects they entail in the manner in which they had been represented. The goal was to bring to the surface the memory of these proposals’ potentials, by means of an immersion in the sensations they brought forth in lived experience; what mattered was to produce a living register of the reverberation of their effects in the cultural and political environment of Brazil and France at that time. In short, it was a matter of producing a memory of the bodies affected by this experience and in which it had been inscribed, so as to make it pulsate in the present.

To that end, it would not be enough to restrict the interviews to people who were directly involved with Lygia Clark, her life and/or her work; it was also necessary to produce a memory of the context in which her poetics had found its origin and its conditions of possibility, given that this intervention in the politics of subjectivisation and relation with the other that prevailed back then was part of the atmosphere of the times, and was also present in other ways in the effervescent counter-cultural current of those days. Nor was it a question of recovering the facts or, even less, any supposedly heroic aura that would make them into a model to be eternally preserved and reproduced. The point was rather to actualise the sensations of this assertion of a poetic potential, especially audacious in its critical spirit, its creative imagination and its freedom of cultural and existential experimentation, which became possible in the Brazil of the 1960s because it found sustenance in a broad collective movement. Also necessary was a certain reconstitution of the cultural movement that existed at the same time in Paris, where the artist lived for eight years from 1968 onward. Finally, it was a matter of inciting a work of elaboration of a whole generation’s intense experience, which had until here been hindered by the superimposition of the deleterious effects of the dictatorship and of neoliberalism on the exercise of thought. To accomplish this task I was armed with my thirty years of clinical practice.

The point was, then, not to develop a work of registering the past and its passing into archive for the greater glory of a sterilised cultural heritage, but rather to make the force of event of this body of work and the cultural movement in which it is inscribed capable of intervening in the present: positions that are opposed to each other by virtue of the two distinct conceptions of memory they presuppose. The first concerns the forms produced by a certain vital movement – that is, their empty corpses and their representations as certified by the (official) history of art, ready to be stuffed and fetishised. The second, on the other hand, is concerned with what is inscribed on the body by the vital movement itself and its reaction to its surroundings, a state of affairs, in this case, suffocating; a movement always renewable, triggering creative imagination that is actualised under the impact of questions of the present.

As I mentioned above, in the last few years there has been in Brazil a renewed vigour

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42 I use ‘event’ here in the sense associated with the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

in the artistic movement among the new generations, after a downturn of more than two decades – resulting from the scars left by the military dictatorship on creative forces, which remained even after the regime was gone. These young artists, however, know this past only through the memory of facts and their respective representations, not the memory of the potential of artistic creation and the vital spaces that its action opened up around it, in art as in daily life. I wanted the project to contribute to reviving this memory and its accessibility. My gamble was that the reactivation of this memory – that of Lygia Clark's legacy in particular – combined with this new current movement, would have the power to feed these ancestral poetics back into the new; and, reciprocally, to feed the new forces back into the experience of those ancestral poetics, which found themselves under a defensive oblivion. In this way, they could be reactivated, their questions taken up again in the confrontation with the present. This strategy allowed for a concert of paradoxical and heterogeneous voices to be made audible – marked by the tone of singularity of the lived experiences, and as such dissonant from the timbres we are used to, whether in the fields of art, therapy or politics. The idea was that through them the outline of the unutterable sphere in which Lygia Clark's work moved could be sketched out and, beyond it, the powerful cultural experience lived at the time, in Brazil as in France – contexts in which this work affirmed itself as a singular response to the questions of the time.

Sixty-five interviews were carried out<sup>43</sup>, shot in France and the United States by Babette Mangolte, and by Moustapha Barat in Brazil.<sup>44</sup> The end product of this work

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43 Filming took place in France with the support of the Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication; Le Fresnoy - Studio national des arts contemporains (editing); and Musée de Beaux-Arts, Nantes (subtling). In Brazil, filming took place with the support of the Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social (BNDES), by means of the Fiscal Incentive Law of the Ministry of Culture.

44 Babette Mangolte is a Franco-American filmmaker. Having been the camerawoman in many of Chantal Akerman's films, she settled in New York, where she made documentaries on the local experimental scene in the early 1970s (among which she documented the works of Trisha Brown and Yvonne Reiner in dance, Rauschenberg and Joan Jones in visual arts, Robert Wilson in theatre etc.). Mangolte teaches nowadays at the University of San Diego, California. Her work has been the object of retrospectives in various countries. Stéphan Moustapha Barrat is a French-American filmmaker, currently living in Rio de Janeiro.

consists of a series of DVDs, each forty minutes to two hours long.<sup>45</sup> In the course of their shooting, Corinne Diserens, at the time director of Musée des Beaux-arts de Nantes, invited me to think up an exhibition based on this material. Another challenge was now posed: would it be pertinent to bring this work into the museological space, knowing that Lygia had deserted it as early as 1963? Would the artist herself have done that if she were alive? We will never know. Yet there is one thing of which we can be sure: she would have reacted energetically to the way in which her work had been put back into the museum. But Lygia is no longer among us, and the decision of how to react to this return could only be taken by ourselves. Assuming the responsibility and the risk of this decision, I chose to intervene in the parameters of the transmission of her work, inside the museum itself. But how to convey a work like Lygia Clark's in this kind of space? This is where we reach the crux of our problem here.

*Poetic forces in the museum?*

To answer these questions, I started from certain curatorial principles. First of all, I wanted it to be known that the investigations of Lygia Clark into objects and *dispositifs* that called out to the bodily experience of the receiver occupied two-thirds of her production. Secondly, I also wanted to show that the work produced during those twenty-six years is not a kind of undifferentiated magma made up of objects that are vaguely called 'sensorial' or 'relational'. Quite to the contrary, these proposals are very distinct from one another, and were grouped by the artist herself into five phases, which she designated with specific names.<sup>46</sup> Each of these phases was composed of a series of proposals around a specific axis of investigation, and it was the poetic research of each field of questioning that led her to the next phase. In order to show

45 The final product of this project, aside from the exhibitions already held in France and Brazil, and their respective catalogues, will consist of an archive available to the public in both countries (Musée de beaux-arts de Nantes and Cinemateca Brasileira de São Paulo). This archive will include 65 filmed interviews in their original versions in DVCAM (30 in Portuguese, 20 in French and 4 in English), of which 53 will also come in a DVD mounted version (26 in Portuguese, 13 in French and 3 in English), thus 12 will not be mounted (4 in Portuguese, 7 in French and 1 in English). Besides the archive, a box set containing 20 DVDs matched with a small book written by the creator of the project will be manufactured in France (500 issues) and in Brazil (1000 issues), with subtitles in the respective languages. Part of the issues will be freely distributed in museums, cultural and educational institutions, and the remainder will be sold in bookshops in France and shops belonging to the SESC units throughout Brazil. The production of the box has the backing in France of the already mentioned Museum and the Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication (Culture and Communications Ministry) and in Brazil of the Ministério da Cultura (Ministry of Culture), the Cinemateca Brasileira and the SESC-SP. It should also be mentioned that the project received a lot of support from France and very little from Brazil (see note 19). 1) The Picture Gallery of the State of São Paulo had to underwrite the entire budget of the exhibition and the catalogue; for this reason, although the filmed interviews are the backbone of the exhibition that resulted in this project, in its Brazilian version the DVDs did not have Portuguese subtitles. 2) Of the 53 DVDs that will make up the archive, 14 will not be available for the time being because of lack of backing in the country for the remainder to be mounted (11 in Portuguese + 3 in French). 3) Also unavailable will be the 14 ones subtitled in Portuguese out of the 24 DVDs of interviews in French and/or English out of the 53 (only the 10 interviews in these languages that will make up the box of DVDs will have been translated and subtitled in Portuguese). 4) Lastly, the sound treatment of the 53 DVDs that should be done in Brazil will only be done to 20 of the DVDs selected for the box. Backing for these 4 sections are welcome, as well as for subtitling in other languages, mainly in Spanish and English, in such a way that the archive be available for the public in other countries.

46 The phases of Lygia Clark's experimental proposals, with their respective names and dates, are: *Nostalgia of the Body* (1966), *The House is the Body* (1967-69), *The Body is the House* (1968-70), *Collective Body*, subsequently called *Phantasmatics of the Body* (1972-75) by the artist, and *Structuring of the Self* (1976-1988).

that at the exhibition at the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, for each phase we presented original objects, replicas, photos and a documentary featuring Lygia Clark herself.<sup>47</sup> There were also concise texts pointing out the central problems explored by the artist at each moment, the name and the date of the phase in question, and the proposals that belonged to it.

It was equally important, to show that the issues that she pursued with her experimental adventures were the same that already drove her painting and sculpture investigations at the beginning of her careers. To make this palpable for the public, I arranged the trajectory of her work in the exhibition from the end to the beginning: only after having gone through the whole itinerary did one discover the works of painting and sculpture. Thus there was a chance to stop reducing the gaze on this initial part of the work to the perception of its forms alone, and to call up the other capacity of the eye, in order to 'see' beyond the visible what Lygia Clark sought to convey by means of her geometric strategies. In fact, in her works of painting and sculpture, the Brazilian artist had drawn into the singular direction of her investigation the legacy of both Russian Constructivism and the Geometric Abstraction of Mondrian, which had left a mark on Concretism<sup>48</sup> and Neoconcretism<sup>49</sup> – important artistic movements in the Brazil of the 1950s, in which Lygia Clark took part as one of their most vigorous expressions. From the viewpoint of her later investigations, it could then be grasped that the artist's corporeal proposals were indeed an unfolding of her initial pictorial and sculptural research. If it is incontestable that she was already exploring the double capacity of the sensual and its paradox from the very beginning of her work, after the turn in 1963 the research of that double capacity would cease to be limited to the gaze, and would branch out instead into an exploration of the senses by means of objects that called upon all of them.

Finally, the filmed interviews: in the Pinacoteca, they were spread across three moments of the exhibition, in the beginning, middle and end. The public was received by

47 Two documentaries have been made on the practices proposed by Lygia Clark that implicated the body: *O Mundo de Lygia Clark*, by Eduardo Clark, son of the artist, puts together the four initial phases of corporeal experiments (Rio de Janeiro, 1973); *A Memória do Corpo*, by Mario Carneiro, focuses on *Structuring of the Self* (Rio Arte, Rio de Janeiro, 1982).

48 The 1950s were marked in Brazil by a 'developmentalist' set of ideas. Such ideals led the dream, under the presidency of Juscelino Kubitchek, of realising the country's integration into modernity. It was a moment when the new capital city, Brasília, was built as the greatest emblem for such a dream. In this environment – and not only in Brazil but in other Latin American countries that underwent a similar process – the constructivist trends were re-actualised by the resonance of the new local landscape with the context in which they had been created in Europe. It is in this horizon that the Concretist movement and its Neoconcretist dissidence emerged. Such movements were preceded by the creation of the São Paulo (1948) and Rio de Janeiro (1949) Modern Art Museums, the São Paulo Biennale (1951) and of the *Ruptura* movement (1952). *The National Concrete Art Exhibition* took place in 1956.

49 Neoconcretism was born as a splinter group of Concretism in 1959, based on a manifesto published in *Jornal do Brasil*, written by poet and art critic Ferreira Gullar, the movement's theoretician. The group was composed of Rio de Janeiro artists, such as Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, Aluísio Carvão, Amílcar de Castro, Décio Vieira, Franz Weissman, Hércules Barsotti, Lygia Pape and Willys de Castro. They considered the art produced by their São Paulo colleagues too formalist and rational, introducing an experimental vein in their proposals, valuing the existential and affective meaning of the work of art, as well as expression and singularity. Their major philosophical reference was the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Ernest Cassirer and Susan Langer. The first *Neoconcrete Exhibition* was held in March 1959 at the Rio de Janeiro Modern Art Museum. This was followed by the *Neoconcrete Exhibition* of 1961, at the São Paulo Art Museum (MASP). The group disbanded in the same year. The Concretists and Neoconcretists came together again in 1967, in the exhibition *New Brazilian Objectivity* organised by Oiticica.

these voices by means of a film loop comprising chosen fragments<sup>50</sup>, and finished their route in a room where two copies of each film were available and could be watched by twelve people at the same time. I wanted the films to be able to impregnate with living memory the ensemble of exhibited objects and documents so as to restore their meaning – that is, the aesthetic experience, inseparably therapeutic and political, lived out by those who participated in these actions and in the context where they took place. My supposition was that only in this way could the condition of these documents as the dead archive they had hitherto been presented as be overcome, turning them into elements of a living memory that produced differences in the present. In the exhibition at the Pinacoteca the room with the films was always full; some people came back every day for a week or more. It is impossible to predict the effects of such encounters: what mattered here was the gesture that made them possible.

### *Archive, dead or alive*

Finding strategies through which to transmit this kind of work, that shifted the regime of the artwork that had prevailed up until then, is a challenge posed not only by Lygia Clark's proposals, but by all artistic practices where the work is not reducible to the object any more, but depends instead on the incorporation of its receivers and on what it provokes in their subjectivity. And beyond this specific type of work there is also the wide variety of ephemeral proposals that we find in contemporary art, especially the interventions in public life. The need to face this challenge was at the origin of the project described here, which is thus inscribed within the field of exhibitions on similar practices currently taking place all over the world. Most of them present archival material as their major focus, motivated by the conviction that it is impossible to reproduce the actions documented by such materials at a later stage.

The idea this particular project brings to the debate is that if indeed such experiments cannot be reproduced retrospectively, finding ways to communicate and preserve them becomes an unavoidable task if we want to approach the thinking that brought them into being, and maintain their power to affect the present and be affected by it. Rising to this demand implies going beyond simply gathering the documentation recorded at the time, organising it and making it public. Isolated from the lived experiences of those practices, the objects, films and photos of the actions they involved become mere shells drained of the vitality of a work for ever lost in the parched earth of dead archive – relics of a past, destined to become objects of reverence and then filed under the categories of art history. Our attitude to such artistic productions should be the opposite: their very existence should have the power to go against the grain of the totalising will that moves 'this' history, engendered by the colonial-academic spirit of Europe and North America, marked respectively by the colonial and imperialist sub-conscious. These proposals can potentially bring the categories in question into crisis, obliging us to retrace the outlines of other histories – a multiple and infinite process of creation and differentiation that cannot ever be defined once and for all in the name of a centralising geopolitic, at the risk of losing nothing less than art itself.

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50 The loop consists in a DVD including fragments of each one of the interviews. The latter were taken from the first two minutes of each one, where the interviewee can be seen in four simultaneous images on the screen, each one of them representing a sequence of discourse, edited from the most significant excerpts of their testimonies.

This leads us to think that it can be interesting for museums to keep their function of building archives of artistic productions, as long as they are based on another concept of memory and the meaning of its construction. Lygia Clark's work is an example of that: it effectively indicates an interesting line of response to the problems posed in the field of art today, which is increasingly coveted (and undermined) by the pimping of banks, corporations and city administrations, motivated by the imperial interests of global capitalism. Like a visionary, the artist finds a place among those who created a subtle response to the gloomy fate of artistic practice in the present. These are answers that, through distinct strategies, counter the logic of neutralising the disruptive power of the work and instrumentalises it with other purposes in mind.

This obviously does not mean we should behave like Lygia Clark. This artist's *dispositions* belong to her thinking poetics and to her time. On the other hand, if we still hear Lygia Clark's voice, it is because the question the legacy of her critical power poses continues to be significant, and exceeds completely the limits of her work: how to revive today the political potential inherent in artistic creation, its power to establish possibilities?

*For or against museums: a false problem*

Finding out whether or not museums allow for this or any other gesture of critical conflagration may not be the best way of posing the problem. There are no regions of reality that are good or evil in themselves, with a supposedly essential identity or morality that would define them once and for all. We have to shift the givens of the problem. The focus of the question, instead, should be ethical: one has to track the forces that invest each museum at each moment of its existence, from the most poetic ones to those of its most undignified instrumental, neutralisation. Between the two poles, active and reactive, a changing multiplicity of forces is asserted, at varied and variable degrees of potential, in a constant reordering of the diagrams of power. Such bundles of forces are present in each one of the figures that compose the cartography of this territory today.

There are no ready-made formulae for this kind of evaluation; it depends on the resonant powers of each one's body – be they artist, curator or critic – being activated. However, before it lends itself to an evaluation of the site, this resonance must make them vulnerable to the new problems that pulsate in the collective sensibility. Problems in a virtual state are the starting point of the poetic gesture that brings them into the visible and utterable, thus opening unthinkable lungs of poetic breath. In the case of curators, for example, such vulnerability allows them to sense the artistic proposals that hold the power to actualise such problems. The next step consists of creating adequate conditions for the transmissibility of each of these propositions, as well as their articulation, thus giving shape to the problem to be conveyed. It is only then that the issue of the site comes up. The curator is thus in collaboration with the work of production of meaning that is characteristic of artistic thought, and lives up to the ethical responsibility of his function, conscious of the political (and therapeutic) value of the artistic experience and the interference of his own work in this sphere.

But such curators are rare, something not without its historical reasons. Let us not forget that the figure of the curator as we know it today is a very recent one; it became established with neoliberalism, as a means of managing the tense relationships

between artistic production, market and museum, the three vertices of the triangle created in this regime. But it is up to each curator to decide how to invest such a difficult position: the caricature version of the yuppie in the territory of art – a character who contributes to making the contemporary art museum and centre into one of the chief tools of cultural capitalism – is only one of them. It implies a supervaluation of the market and museum vertices in detriment to that of art, in exchange for the satisfaction of his desire for ‘inclusion’, even if intermittent, in the banquet of capital where he can gorge on the remains of luxury delicacies, wearing his Armani suit. The sad figure of a hunter of artists on the lookout for young flesh, on the payroll of the pimps of creation, the submission to whom he accepts for reasons of narcissistic identification, in awe of their limitless power.

When the art vertex really matters in this kind of negotiation, whether a proposal takes place or not in museological spaces will depend on its singularity and the quality of the problem that gives rise to it; and if, in some cases, the museum can be *the* site for these actions, or at least one of their possible sites, the choice of an adequate institution has to involve a cartography of the forces at work before any initiative is taken. The same applies to the decision to accept or not a museum’s invitation for an exhibition. Evidently, in this tracking and tracing an evaluation of the third vertex of the triangle is indispensable: the sponsors, when the costs of an exhibition are not shouldered by the museum (often the case in Brazil, where the public funding for culture is deducted from the taxes of big banks and companies, giving the decision over which projects are to be sponsored to such agents or, more precisely, to their marketing departments; which means that the country’s overall cultural agenda finds itself entirely in the hands of private initiative). It is in this way that the properly poetic force can participate in the destiny of contemporary society, contributing to the affirmation of its own vitality, immune to the seductive call of the market, which proposes an orientation in exclusive accord with its own interests.

The poetic force is one of the voices in the paradoxical polyphony through which the heterogeneous and unpredictable becomings of public life are traced. These becomings continually reinvent themselves in order to liberate life from the blockages that build up in the infectious zones where the present becomes unbearable. Artists have a fine ear for the inarticulate sounds that reach us from the unutterable at the points where the dominant cartography frays apart. Perhaps it is because she allowed us to hear them with rare accuracy that Lygia will not stop calling us.

## ON TRANSLATION: I GIARDINI ANTONI MUNTADAS

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As Suely has mentioned, Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica contributed to some practices theretofore unknown in contemporary art during their period, which are being recovered, but which I also believe pose, in the perspective of the museum, the question of what happens when the artist disappears: when he or she does not leave specifications, notes, diagrams, etc. in order to ‘reconstruct’ his or her work.



I believe that, like the disappearance of artists such as Beuys or Broodthaers, the examples of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, and also those of James Lee Byars, Félix González-Torres etc., pose the question of the interpretation of the work, which can be more literal or documentary or, as we have just seen with Suely, an attempt to reposition it with maximum care. However, even so I believe that there is a problem for museums when the artist has disappeared and not left clear indications of the intentions of a work left unfinished, above all when this work is not necessarily made up of objects, but rather artefacts, to use an anthropological term. The artefact, as a possibility to be activated and, due to its characteristics, as a proposal and relationship with the audience, is distinguished from the object in a traditional sense. I would like to raise this subject at the round table because I believe it is a problem, and my presentation will establish the relationship with the idea of the museum, its curatorship activity and its responsibilities. I have chosen to speak in the first person, which is not very comfortable. It is always better to speak in the third person. Speaking in the first person means that I have to confront, through my practice, what I say. In a certain way, when we artists speak in public I think we need to talk about what we do. From this perspective, Nuria, in her introduction, pointed out that I would talk about the *On Translation* series I have been working on since 1995, which poses problems in interpretation. I believe the word *translation* and the translation – *on translation* – is a metaphor for the problems in interpretation we have in the world we live in. I believe we live in a translated world, and through these projects I attempt to state or reconstruct ways to state and understand certain phenomena I am particularly interested in. I have decided to talk about just one work in the *On Translation: I Giardini* series. I believe this is the project (due to the fact it leaves the museum, yet occupies an institutional space: the Spanish pavilion of the latest Venice Biennial) most suitable for stating an opposition between the museum and pavilion in an international-type exhibition in such a situation, developing the idea of temporality versus permanence; the idea of context, as I think that the context of Venice, surrounded by a structure of a system and a historic presence of over 100 years of biennials, conditions any type of project.

I was interested – back to the idea of artefacts – that it had to have an exclusive relationship with the context in which it was presented. For this reason, I would say that this is a work I do not believe will ever be able to be presented in a museum as such, as it would be out of the context for which it was conceived: the *giardini*, the relationship with other pavilions and the relationship with the entire cultural structure suggested by the Biennial. The project is presented as of the territory of I Giardini, a territory created by the Napoleonic occupation which meant the loss of a public space: I Giardini di Castello disappeared as a public space. The Biennial occupies this space and creates an infrastructure which is repeated every two years. This cultural infrastructure, which alternates the art biennial with the architecture one, produces and is part of some events we could call cultural industry. What I thought was most important about the I Giardini was this loss of a public space; it is over 100 years since people used the Giardini di Castello, as they are exclusively occupied by the biennial structure.

I Giardini presents a space, which as can be seen in this photograph, seems to be melancholic, but these gardens are part of the most proletarian area of Venice, the Castello, which has been ‘forgotten’ ever since the creation of the biennial in 1895,

after a meeting between the Mayor of Venice and local artists in the *Florian*. I am not going to talk about its history, just mention several points. They saw that in the vigils of the universal exhibitions it was possible to create an exhibition for reviving art in Venice internationally, but marketing it as well, as in the Venice Biennial works were sold (until 1968, when the sales office disappeared).

Throughout over 100 years of Biennial I think the topographic changes in I Giardini are interesting. These evolved through the appearance of the pavilions, gradually over time (Belgium was the first country to build one in 1907, due to its colonial past which granted it cultural power, represented by this early presence), and in the vertical-horizontal axis that leads to the Italian Pavilion, which inaugurated the Biennial.

These maps and topographies also create power plays, urban geography, of what could be considered a micro-city. The *giardini* are constituted of a small-scale urbanism, in which moments of cohabitation and relations with space create situations that go beyond culture and signify relations with power and economy. We see how the structure of the pavilions of the United States, England and France in the years 1940-1942 transform them into pavilions for the army and the navy. The relationship with politics is obvious, and has always been a cultural policy which, with the passing of time, has perhaps hidden true politics. There is an interesting reference in these topographies and it is that the pavilions in Venice have an architectural constitution, and here I would talk about the architectural interpretation, a subject that could also be important in regard to the museum, as it would be necessary to consider how a museum identifies and creates its image through the architecture it commissions or is given, and here we see how the façades of the different pavilions have suffered what we could call an architectural face-lift with the different political successions or uses of each of them.

The Italian pavilion has undergone transformation for the political moment, with official architectures and representations of certain architectural orders that, at certain times, were used to hide, as in the intervention by Carlo Scarpa, with the purpose of camouflaging a past or an architectural history (to return again, during the Berlusconi period, to its Mussolini precedent). In each country there is a history, a history that defines these official histories or histories of cultural face-lift, as I was saying, which somehow has to do with the political histories of each of the countries and how these were transformed at given moments. The relation with political regimes and economic structures is clear, and this element is not only found in the transformation of the façade, but also in the recent appearance of some new pavilions, such as those of Venezuela or Korea. China is on stand-by.

This is the map, the topography of the latest Biennial, of where the different pavilions were located. And these are the most recent photographs of each of them, which obviously were pre-prepared for an event that is, in a sense, festive or commemorative, as during the winter these pavilions are totally unused, stagnant in their purpose. This could be compared with a film history: the pavilions can be transformed, like a film studio, when the film is about to be filmed.

This is the context in which the project is inserted. It is important to start the work to understand the situation. In this case it is no longer site-specific, but rather context-specific, a context that is very much defined by particularities derived from the constitution of the territory itself. I mentioned the latest pavilions, of Korea and Venezuela. It was interesting to note that Israel, the year right after its constitution, already had

its own. In other words, all are confluences of a cultural showcase, but also of a more complex situation. Sometimes I miss out on this, but this situation that is so complicated has to do with these paradoxes culture presents. The relations this territory can create with the history of the pavilions and the presence of the countries represented in them as at international fairs, is similar to the recent establishment of theme parks, parks totally dedicated to one discipline or type of distraction, recreation which, at certain times, constitute an obvious typology of a contemporary consumer situation. Approaching *On Translation: I Giardini*, Bartomeu Marí invited me to suggest a project. What we found when visiting the space was a pavilion left behind from the latest architectural biennial. This biennial had left behind a very destroyed place, and we found ourselves with a usable situation that was very run down. As we had to restore the space prior to carrying out a project, we asked ourselves what is space, what is its memory, the after-image created by an exhibition, proposal or prior presence, which perhaps becomes erased or persists. I believe architecture speaks and that walls breathe. In this case, we decided to start all over again and create a structure necessary for the project. A central axis was decided which was the project of *On Translation: I Giardini*, which refers to I Giardini di Castello as I mentioned earlier, and attempts to introduce the external space into the pavilion for which it opens. So it opens, and is dedicated to the series *On Translation*.

That was a matter for the curator, Bartomeu Marí. I delegated this aspect in him, because in this I believe that I try to create a link with what can be the interpretation of the work, its translation as I mentioned at the start. I see the works of *On Translation* as like musical scores. In the world of music it is very easy to understand, in the world of art it is harder to conceive, that there is a script, some scores, as well as composers and interpreters. In my case I stop interpreting the work whenever another project is announced. I concentrate on this new project and leave those that already exist to be reinterpreted according to the way the work can change depending on the mediation of the institution, its presentation and the totality of its display. Obviously there is a dialogue. I would say that I always work with people, I never work with institutions in their name.

The previous works of *On Translation* were presented around this structure, to call to the attention that it was not a space for celebration, not a space for contemplation, but rather a space for discussion on practices in interpretation. Enrich Fanch (the designer-architect), Bartomeu Marí (as curator responsible for the project) and myself discussed the representation of these works within this score interpretation, of the work in itself. These were works done in different places, by different methods, and articulated around the central zone of *I Giardini*. The location of the *On Translation: I Giardini*, which is the work I wish to emphasise, stood out with these vertical-horizontal axes, and sought to create a space that would be totally hybrid, that would not reflect anything that could be a specific space or with a national identity, a space that was to be a generic structure of *stand-by*, a passing through, transition, as conceived in the book by Marc Augé, of what we could call non-spaces, such as waiting rooms, information centres, airport lounges; places where a lot of time is spent in movement or in queues. For this reason we put a new take on generic and standard furnishings, which frequently serve other functions. In this case I was interested in redesigning and redefining this space as regards to the situation produced in *I Giardini*. It had some elements, to put it this way, that were neutral. I believe that the work speaks more

about the environment created than about the installation. I say environment in the sense that they were spaces that suggested they were to be used, to have a certain use, and the elements – the kiosk, for instance – were based on research done on topographies of the façades I mentioned earlier on. The telephones alluded to critical views of the history of the Biennial, and there was a list in the back of the kiosk that reflected the countries that were absent in this visible-invisible situation of participation in the Biennale, of the different pavilions and their national representations.

In the manner in which this invisibility began to be shaped, it also reflected that there was a dispersion not only in I Giardini, but in all of Venice, the city-museum Venice. This work not only had to take into account I Giardini, but Venice as well, as a defined space-context. This kiosk, aside from the experience and the information it suggested, wanted to be a space to use, and activate this artefact that could offer a reflection related to the moment when you exit the pavilion and confront the location of the city itself in relation to the biennial.

In this case, I believe that the different uses were confronted with photographic images of people in queues in different public spaces and contexts, and with plasma screens of the images of transformed façades and a series of numbers and headlines that scrolled along like film credits, referring to the fact that we live in a society where press headlines and statistics not only define cultural policies, but even lead us in certain directions, in all the territories and situations we live in.

And, this is where I end. As I said earlier, to talk in the first person is more complicated and forces one to be modest. I have attempted to offer a pattern, dissect the project and in some way, I believe that if I can contribute in the debate, as I suggested at the beginning, I would like to do so in relation with this interpretation the works that, in a certain way, when they have been activated once, move on to be interpreted later by different curatorial practices, and are defined by the very will to present the work: in other words, to make the work of the artist visible, the responsibility of why and how belonging to who interprets it.

Thank you.

## TERRITORIES

JEAN-FRANÇOIS CHEVRIER

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*'Now that the artist has truly lost his pioneer role in society, he is more and more respected by a social organism that is rotting. At the same time that the artist is more digested by this society that is on a wayward track, the artist can only attempt insofar as he or she is able, to inoculate a new way of living. In the very moment the object is digested, the artist is digested by a society that has already found a title and a bureaucratic mission for him or her: the artist will be the engineer of the amusements of the future... An activity that does not alter in any way the balance of social structures.'* Lygia Clark

This comment is found in issue no 5-6 (second quarter of 1971) of the magazine *Robbo*. It appears at the end of a text titled: 'The body is the home: sexuality: invasion of

A partir de 1968, un acte de haute technologie humaine se met progressivement à dominer de la planification agricole. Les lieux sont désormais conçus selon l'économie, les services sont organisés en fonction des besoins. On s'aperçoit qu'il n'est pas possible d'être au service des hommes sans être au service de l'économie. En 1970, les régions d'Europe se retrouvent à l'initiative de la planification. Elles ont alors pour tâche de définir les orientations de développement de leur territoire, de définir les actions à mener, de définir les moyens à mettre en œuvre. Elles ont également pour tâche de définir les actions à mener, de définir les moyens à mettre en œuvre. Elles ont également pour tâche de définir les actions à mener, de définir les moyens à mettre en œuvre.

[illegible]

La réalisation de cette nouvelle conception conduit au groupe d'effort et à prendre la relation technique avec un seul agent collectif et unique, le

convergence idéologique forte, basé sur  
les principes de la rationalité moderne  
tout.

L'art institutionnel se présente sous une forme particulière de la relation qui s'établit à la relation sociale, définissant la séparation entre l'œuvre et le monde dans la mesure où il détermine une relation entre l'œuvre et le monde. L'art institutionnel se présente sous une forme particulière de la relation qui s'établit à la relation sociale, définissant la séparation entre l'œuvre et le monde dans la mesure où il détermine une relation entre l'œuvre et le monde.

des et d'élargir l'accès à la terre  
agricole, et d'augmenter les  
revenus des populations qui  
sont économiquement et  
socialement marginalisées.

[illegible][illegible]

BRUNNEN VERLAG  
FÜR LEHRBÜCHER UND ARBEITSBÜCHER

[illegible]

conçue le meilleur moyen de défendre l'Asie du Far-East et de garantir notre indépendance, passé comme à l'heure actuelle, nous sommes en mesure de faire face à tout événement.

Le 22 novembre, il y eut de nouvelles élections de la parlement et des députés élus. Les élections furent libres et les représentants individuels de la gauche purent entrer dans le parlement sans la moindre restriction. Elle donna le maximum de la victoire au parti communiste.

Une élection se déroula de la victoire du parti communiste au fait que les élections furent libres et que les députés élus purent entrer dans le parlement sans la moindre restriction.

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[illegible]

fig. 1 2 3 *Robho* magazine, issues 5-6 (1971): 'The misery in Tucumán'. Documentation carried out by a group of committed artists in the Tucumán Arde campaign.

the individual “territory”: Lygia Clark: Mankind is a living structure of a biological and cellular architecture.’ It is hard to subscribe to the comment the text finishes with: ‘The only way, for the artist, to escape recovery is to attempt to launch creativity in general, with no psychological or social limitations. His creativity will be expressed by the living experience.’ However, the previous diagnosis is still valid.

Included in the same issue of *Robho* was a text by Jean Baudrillard that he had written for a conference in Aspen, Colorado in June 1970 dedicated to design and the environment. The text ended like this: ‘Aspen is the Disneyland of design and environment: it is a case of the end of the world and universal therapeutics in an ideal and enchanted environment. Yet the problem far surpasses Aspen: it is that the entire theory of design and environment constitutes a generalised utopia, a utopia that is created and converted in secret by a capitalist order that dictates itself for a second nature.’ The phenomenon of the imperialism of design stated by Baudrillard ends the hopes Lygia Clark set on a generalised creativity. This does not undermine the relationship established by Lygia Clark between territory, intimacy and group activity from continuing to be an even more regulated and manipulative practice of design applied to art and the environment. Lygia Clark had a therapeutic viewpoint and saw society as an organism. These notions are problematic. Yet the difficulty we have in updating her statement of artistic activity – beyond a strictly historical point of view – depends above all on the premises of this definition. Two premises can possibly be distinguished:

1. The systematic assimilation of capitalism with a liberal bourgeois norm. In 2007 the bourgeois liberal model that had upheld modern art seemed to be a distant dream. It must not be forgotten that modern art in the first place, particularly in France, has been possible since the mid-nineteenth century thanks to the trust that a liberal bourgeois class – in both senses of the term – opposed to an official state culture, granted a heterodoxical creativity that was even provocative. The new global oligarchy that favours neo-pop-art provocative attitudes does not participate in this liberal tradition. Contemporary art is already a network system that has expanded like an enormous bubble beyond all productive conflict between tradition and modernity. The avant-garde movements have started from zero at times, to break away from a tradition that they invented for the moment. The operational principle of contemporary art is the production of distinctive advantages, and the parameters of territorial attraction have replaced in current language the criteria of properly speaking international gatherings.

2. Artistic activity, which takes place in the real timing of efficiency, as opposed to the work of art denounced as being a thing, a fetish, etc. This naive view, that considers artistic activity as being freed of the object as a necessary goal, tends to reduce the artistic experience, particularly that of the viewer, to immediate consumption. It denies the possibility of a work of art being a long-lasting object of successive and diverse experiences. Some artists had become conscious of these difficulties towards the end of the 1970s. Dan Graham, for example, placed a value on the monumental model theorised by architect Aldo Rossi, even though he had already envisioned, in a conceptual logic derived from pop, the disposable model. I add that this overestimation of the activity of the work was frequently matched, in the theory and the experiments of the 1960s, by a fusion concept of creativity. The individual dimension of creativity was accepted to the degree in which it participated in the interactivity of an experimental group.

At any rate, the issue of *Robho* is a goldmine for reflections on the territories of art since the 1960s. The pages dedicated to Lygia Clark have been reproduced in facsimile in the









catalogue dedicated to this artist by the Museum of Beaux Arts of Nantes in 2005, and other pages have been circulated more recently by the Bon Accueil association of Rennes. These pages are about the activities of the Argentinian political art movement Tucumán Arde, which takes its name from the province of Tucumán, qualified as 'social territory in latent crisis', thus symbolising the economic and political situation of Argentina. The archives of this movement were (badly) exhibited in the latest Documenta and are exhibited today in Rennes, but the context of the update of the historical movement has been taken over by a new group of feminist activists.

Around 1970, very soon after May of 1968 and in the context of the North American Movement stimulated by protests against the Vietnam War, the notion of territory enabled the articulation of geopolitical and social matters on the heritage of the formal experiences carried out by historic avant-garde movements. Hence the title of the dossier in *Robho*: 'Marx and Mondrian's children.' In the context of neo-pop contemporary art, this association appears to be impossible unless it is a recycling of a nostalgic kitsch repertoire.

The issue of *Robho* brings back the importance of renovation to us, in the avant-garde movements with political hues of the end of the 1960s, the agit-prop theatre and street theatre. The theatrical model requesting the spectator to participate was found everywhere. It was articulated around the idea of multi-sensorial experiences, enabling access to an integral body, beyond functional breaks and social and cultural discriminations. The notion of territory is, indeed, inseparable from the body experience. Applied to artistic action, it is embodied by the theatre.

The territory is inhabited (place) and crossed (space). It simultaneously has integration or psycho-physiological disintegration and ritual permanent elements mixed with automatic features of daily living. This dimension of permanency is an example of the experience carried out by Fernand Deligny in 1967 in Cévennes with autistic children. Deligny talked about 'customs'. The autistic child is there, in a given territory that he tours and encourages. He carries out there the trajectories he is used to. Deligny talks about 'wandering lines' (wandering in the sense of errancy) inserted in the idea of the area of living and playing. The trajectories have been mapped by adults in charge of the children.

This is in fact a living structure, prior to the organisation of a social community founded on verbal communication.

The model in Deligny is ethological. Any conceptualisation of territory that does not systematically make a distinction between symbolic and biological can be based on that model. It is known to what a degree vitality and metaphors of the organism are worked out in it. The merit of ethology, as practised by Jakob von Uexküll, is to introduce a dynamics of the image in the description of animal behaviour and its means of living or environment (Umwelt). In the 1920s Uexküll founded in Hamburg an *Institut für Umweltforschung* (Institute for the Study of Environment).

'He asked himself, which animals possess a territory and which ones don't? A fly passing over and over again through a portion of space around a lamp does not possess a territory because of this. However, a spider, building its web and working in it, possesses a dwelling that is a territory at the same time. The same can be said of the mole. It also builds a dwelling and a territory, a regular system of corridors and bur-

rows that extend under the ground like a spider's web'<sup>51</sup>. Uexküll compares the way of being of animals in their environment and the way of being of human beings. Yet is it possible to compare inhabited territories and imaginary territories?

When he comments that the mole in captivity 'arranges the corridors in such a way that they are like a spider's web', Uexküll did not mean that the mole imitates the spider<sup>52</sup>. He compares shapes dictated by what he calls 'natural planes'<sup>53</sup>. For him this notion substitutes that of instinct: 'The presence of natural planes is found in the texture of the spider's web or the nest of a bird, as in both cases this is not an individually produced goal'<sup>54</sup>. Yet the simile of the spider's web suggests that the mole builds its burrow dreaming of the aerial dwelling of the spider. The captive mole, equipped with imaginary capacities, has become a fictional being such as in Kafka.

This type of metaphorical movement constitutes the entire wealth of stereotypes and images that are active in ethology. I will offer a second example. In humans, migratory movements are oriented; the populations of South and East seek to reach the prosperous zones of the North and West. On the contrary, primitive peoples moved towards the Orient and countries in the Southern hemisphere (Africa in particular) which were considered to be reservoirs, homes or refuges of magic thinking. There is nothing more complex or ambiguous than the intermingling of these two flows. Human geography converges here with ethology and its speculations. Uexküll did not hesitate in qualifying as 'magical' the resource to 'innate routes' that migratory birds follow, or, on a lower scale, the female weevil on the birch leaf that it cuts to make its nest.

The analogy of the two trajectories, beyond the scale difference, is visualised in the proximity of the two illustrative schema: the resemblance of the birch leaf with the downward tip and that of the silhouette of the African continent shape a behaviour in common with some animal species that trace their route in a territory with the certainty of innate knowledge.

The vitalistic imaginary approach presents the definitions or metaphorical transformations of the experienced territory that is incorporated. The spider is a prototype of this stereotype to the degree in which as it weaves its web it follows an image that completely associates body, dwelling and territory. I remember that the relationship between art and ethology is explicit in Joseph Beuys. Beuys knew Konrad Lorenz well, who is considered to be the founder of ethology; they met through a common friend, biologist and zoologist Heinz Sielmann, who produced documentary films about animal life. This author especially included metaphorical interpretations of animal relations of the human species, and because he enabled thinking about the phenomena of territorial intimacy, the ethological stereotype can inspire an alternative to the arrangement of technocratic territory and management of territories.

It is quite obvious that we should not be satisfied by limiting ourselves to invoking territory as is used normally in the language of contemporary art. Artists are quite frequently invited to adorn, fill their speeches with flowers and operations addressed to the

51 Jakob von Uexküll, *Worlds of Animals and Men (Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen)*, (1934), trad. Philippe Muller, Paris, Denoël (1984), 'Agora', 2004, p. 68.

These comments are inserted in a chapter titled 'Heim und Heimat'. The English translation 'Domains and territory' does not reveal the etymological relationship of the two notions.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 68-69. Original text: 'In der Gefangenschaft legt er seine Gänge in der Weise an, dass sie einen Spinnennetz gleichen.' (Hambourg, Rowohlt, 1956, p. 75).

53 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 57.



fig. 4 Helio Oiticica, *Glass bólido 5 'Tribute to Mondrian'*, 1965 and *Mosquito de Maguiera bailando con el Parangolé P10 Capa 6*, 1965. ('I am Parangolé's pet, Mosquito de la Samba.')



fig. 5 *Campement du Serret*, 1973-1974. Photograph by Thierry Boccon-Gibod, published in *Nous et l'Innocent*, Paris, Maspero, 1975; reissued in Fernand Deligny, *Œuvres*, Paris, L'Arachnéen, 2007.

fig. 6 Texts by Fernand Deligny, published in *Nous et l'Innocent*, Paris, Maspero, 1975; reissued in Fernand Deligny, *Œuvres*, Paris, L'Arachnéen, 2007.

⑥

au flanc d'une vague de chènes-vert.  
 un territoire  
 il ne faut pas avoir peur de la recommencer  
 l'histoire  
 sans se lasser  
 il était une fois des hommes, et des arbres, et de  
 l'eau, et des pierres  
 et il ne s'agit pas de l'histoire de chaque UN là  
 mais de celle d'un certain NOUS  
 une espèce de nous  
 un nous d'espèce qui n'en finit pas de dérapar  
 dans les virages  
 du S  
 de soi-même  
 et les vagues érodées de la chaîne hercynienne  
 se prêtent volontiers à la présence là  
 de radeaux très précaires à la recherche  
 du commun d'avant l'un et l'autre  
 se nourrir alors s'écrivant ce nourrir.



search for maximum financial benefits or 'competition'. It is necessary to redefine the notion of territory as stated in life sciences and human sciences. Beuys is undoubtedly the artist who has gone furthest in an integration movement that goes from ethology to political ecology, including geography. To these three fields it is necessary to add urban sociology, without which no human geography is thinkable, above all when the great population migrations operate in the sense of an urbanisation that is permanently growing, stimulated by worldwide crowding in the metropolises.

It would be necessary to question in a systematic way the historic validity and perspective of artistic activity in these four models (ethology, geography, urban sociology and political ecology). The arrangers of the territory themselves, in other words, those who must transform the territory and not just interpret it, need representations and images. These cannot be reduced to descriptive documents with vague picturesque effects. The criticism of the dominance of so-called objective visualisation that widely defined multi-sensorial art of the 1960s, must be ever more frequently a way of expanding visibility of the territory of marginalisation and exclusion. This was the goal of the group Tucumán Arde and also the work of artist Helio Oiticica, who was close to Lygia Clark, when he chose to work in favelas. I commented that he could, in this territory, do what a standard bourgeois urban space prohibited. Doing this enabled the visibility of that territory.

This has led to the notion of territorial intimacy. This notion was central in the elaboration of the exhibition of 'Territories' presented in 2001 in the School of Beaux Arts, as a result of a seminar that continues still today. (The first sessions this year have been dedicated to Deligny, Uexküll and the work by Ahlam Shibli). Territorial intimacy, not to be mistaken for 'territories of intimacy', designated an experience that takes over, even revolutionises, the distinction between private/public on which separation and distinction of functional, standardised spaces is founded. I clearly perceived the reality in 1996 when I discovered the photographic review made by Marc Pataut on the occupation by homeless families and single people of the vacant industrial land of Cornillon where the Grand Stadium of France was to be built<sup>55</sup>.

In development language and the organisation of urban territory, a vacant territory is a residual space a rustic reservoir, a place that is more or less constructable; the situation of the terrain, its dimensions and morphology, define a potential for 'intervention'. Any photographic description that is similar to this functional interpretation constitutes a work of searching and participates in preliminary studies. Quite obviously, this is not the case now.

Combining abnormality and anonymity, the vacant space is a public anti-space. It is a manifestation among other things of a crisis in the industrial city which is also a crisis of the bourgeois city. Public space must be the match between private space and materialisation of the political ideal of the modern 'city'. This ideal is constantly being invoked to cover up the conflictive structures inscribed in urban development, but that does not withstand the facts. Vacant space is one of those facts. It has even become a stereotype of the malfunctions of normalisation and control that are exerted on urban space. This figure corresponds to the anarchistic values and conventions of counter-culture of the 1960s, which have been widely institutionalised.

Within this tradition of counter-culture, Marc Pataut has placed himself on the side of

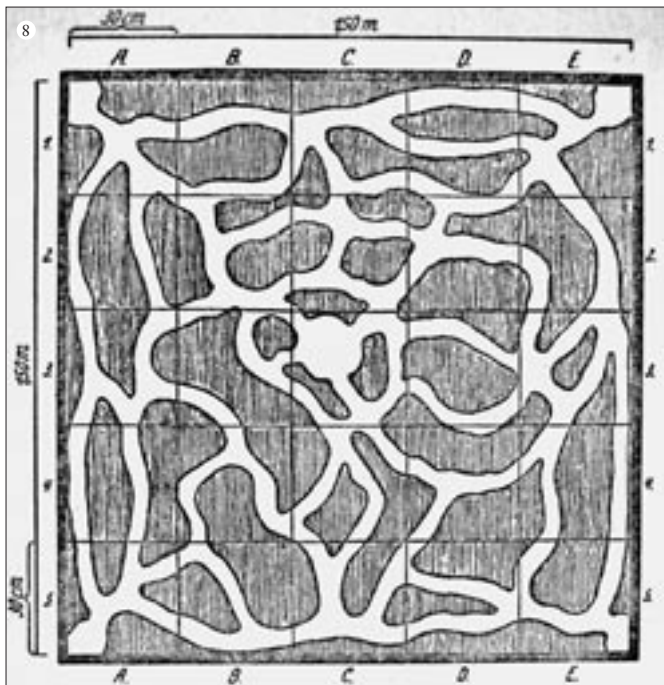
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55 For more on this matter see: *Do not fold*, texts by J.-F. Chevrier and Ghislaine Dunant, Ivry-sur-Seine, 1997 (English/French).



fig. 7 *Campement du Serret*, end of 1973, backdrop map on cardboard, 63 x 51.5 cm; reissued in Fernand Deligny, *Œuvres*, Paris, L'Arachnéen, 2007.

fig. 8 Jakob von Uexküll, 'Dwelling and territory of the mole', *Animal worlds and the human world*, 1965.



those being excluded; he has become their portrayer, sharing their intimacy. But this intimacy, translated into images, is no longer that chosen or forced corner of a protected space which it is generally identified by and at times is denounced as a reduction of the relationship between private and public. Territorial intimacy is that which an individual, a family or community maintains with their own environment, beyond domestic shelter, or more likely, when this itself is a vector and not a split from the environment. Territorial intimacy can be a result of the need for withdrawal caused by the lack of a legal address, an exclusion from public space, yet it has an opening: it institutes another dimension of subjectivity that is removed from the split between private/public. What is revealed in this opening is not the horizon of a collective subject, not even a stereotype of an alternative community built upon the ruins of the political contract. The binary opposition between private/public is suspended by the undermining of intimacy and its deployment in a territorial dimension.

These dynamics of appropriation, different from the right of property, is found in various paintings by Jeff Wall, in 'The Storyteller' (1986), in which territorial intimacy qualifies the dwelling and expansion of a narrative activity; in a more recent image, 'Tenants', in an undoubtedly less lyrical way<sup>56</sup>. The word 'tenants' designates, in this case, the precariousness of those who do not own their homes but rather occupy them beyond a strict interior/exterior cut, in a liminar way of interpretation. It is significant that Jeff Wall finds in this black-and-white image a poetics of genre photography of the nineteenth century.

The comparison of the two images by Atget reveals that there may be a formal homologation between the shaping of a nomadic habitat and a picturesque corner of a city. Through two such distant realities there appear the imaginary conditions of territorial appropriation. This, in fact, cannot act in any other way than through the elaboration and transformation of figurative norms. The way Atget takes over the tradition of picturesqueness and transforms it forms part of a critical, poetic and political idea of territory. For him, a nomadic family has no less existence in the space of social visibility than a picturesque corner anchored in the standardised cultural stereotype. However, this is not an attempt to make Atget a pioneer of counter-culture. The idea is obviously ridiculous. The experience, in other words the production of territorial intimacy, requires on the other hand a permanent redistribution of the relationship between private/public with its corresponding interior/external aspect that sends us back to the structure of one's own body. Thus the importance of the threshold effects, and more generally liminar thinking, should not be reduced to patterns of frontiers. When it produces these threshold effects, the image is not only a representation; it quits serving as excessive visibility and becomes active visibility for the human being, like Uexküll's natural plane is for the spider weaving its web.

**Nuria Enguita Mayo** Before starting the debate, I would like to thank you for this presentation, Jean-François. It is also necessary to talk about the recovery of history. And for this reason I think also, in the case of Suely, I would like to point out what she said about bringing to light the memory of the power of certain proposals, not reconstruction of the facts but updating the sensations of a statement. Or, in the case of Muntadas, whose work in the Giardini perfectly collects and summarises all his

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56 *The Storyteller*, 1986. Ektachrome and light box, 229 x 437 cm ; *Tenants*, 2007. Sample in black and white on paper, 255.4 x 335.3 cm.



fig. 9, 10 *Robho* magazine, issues 5-6 (1971): 'Lygia Clark: *Living structures*, 1969'. The participants are tied together by elastic bands. Together they form mouldable structures that are traced in space. Each one conditions with his gestures the gestures of all.



U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of the Inspector General, Washington, D.C. 20535



fig. 12, 13 'The magic route of the migratory bird' and 'The magic path of the female weevil', in *Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen*, pl. 45 and 46, p. 91.







fig. 14, 15 Marc Pataut, *Le bain de Séléna* and *La maison de Joël*, Cornillon, Grands Stade, Saint-Denis, 1994. A collection of 300 images. Exhibition at Documenta X in Kassel in 1997, later in London, Barcelona and Montréal. Publication *Ceux du terrain* edited by Ne Pas Plier, 1997. Acquired by the Fond National d'Art Contemporain, the Conseil Général de la Seine Saint-Denis and diverse private collections.







fig. 16 Eugène Atget, *Cour, rue Beethoven*, 9, 1901. Private collection.



fig. 17 Eugène Atget, *Romanichels, groupe*, 1912. Private collection.

concerns, what catches my attention most is the movement of time and place present in all his works. This relation is a model of the circulation of continuous currents: you are not only viewing the place you are living in, but also remembering and learning how to look at the exhibition in real time. This shifting of time seems important to me. Perhaps now it's time for the audience to speak.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** I liked it a lot that the three were together (Suely Rolnik, Antoni Muntadas, and Jean-François Chevrier) talking about a utopia in which Lygia Clark is surely a capital figure, and Muntadas discussing the subject of context in the Biennial, in which Lygia Clark had her first retrospective (as her participation in the Biennial was a retrospective). But in spite of the presence here of Suely talking about the meaning of Lygia Clark, I believe that Lygia Clark still poses a problem that perhaps will never be solved. It is not possible to talk about her without understanding the context in which she created her work. I found missing, for instance, the relationships between philosophy and Lygia Clark during the 50s, above all with Mario Pedrosa, who knew a lot about phenomenology, from Langer to Merleau-Ponty, and had also worked in a psychiatric hospital in Rio. I believe that this friction between rationality and madness was the basis of the possibility Lygia Clark rehearsed for a rational space leading to a space of absolute freedom of the subject. It should be noted that in 1958 Lygia prepared a text about her work up till that time, a finalised text. The institutional gaze is complex, dramatic, but not totally flat. Let us say that in the 50s one of the people who had influence in the Museum of Art in Rio was married to the owner of the newspaper in which Lygia could publish all her things, and had as advisers on the collection Mario Pedrosa and Maria Martins, lover of Duchamp and the woman who brought desire to Brazilian sculpture.

This was the institution that backed her all her life until she left for Paris. I say so, not to defend the Museum of Modern Art of Rio, but to make it clear that in the relations with institutions there is some sort of backing of an artist that we do not take into account. When Lygia returned to Brazil she mounted an exhibition along with Oiticica. It was a crucial time, which meant the rediscovery of both artists. But Lygia had already had a small book published, financed by the Art Foundation during the dictatorship. It is complex that a dictatorship should have these moments of freedom, as also happens in the case of Cildo Meireles and his works against the dictatorship. I think there is a great geopolitical difficulty which Freud refers to in *Civilisation and its Discontents*. Just as there are tensions between Madrid and Barcelona, there also are tensions between São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. For this reason São Paulo does not accept the importance of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica. And for this reason the mere presence of both of them in the Biennial of São Paulo in 1994 was an attempt to establish a capital triangle along with Mira Schendel. But it was not possible, for political reasons, and because the curatorship was held by a person who did not know nor will ever know anything about Lygia Clark.

The second achievement of the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro was to rescue the memory of the artist, to rescue it literally. They even received a telephone call saying that if they did not go the very next day to collect her archives and writings, her offspring were going to throw it all away. So the museum saved these documents, for want of a better word – although Lygia would have called them works of art. Finally, I would like to recall the work by Guillermo Vergara in the area of education

in the 1998 Biennial on anthropophagy and cannibalism. His starting point was the matter of neo-concretism and Lygia Clark.

This does not solve the enigma, the mystery, the challenge posed by Lygia Clark, but I believe the institutions should receive recognition for their actions. Because perhaps the Brazilian problem is the opposite of that of Europe and the United States: we lack strong museums.

**Suely Rolnik** Thank you for all the information you have contributed. Well, firstly I cannot say very much about Lygia Clark in a 40-minute speech, in which, besides, the main question is whether we should kill off the museum of contemporary art or not, whether it is still possible for poetic force to remain there or not. I used Lygia Clark to address this challenge. Lygia Clark has always played many roles in my life, and today she played this one. About the first part of the talk... well, it did not fit in because I concentrated on associating Lygia with Lacan. I did not mention Mario Pedrosa, and nor am I going to go into this now, because he may be unknown to the Spanish audience. Two fantastic Brazilian critics, very special ones, above all when compared with the state of the profession today, Mario Pedrosa and Ferreira Gullar went along with the Neoconcretist movement in which Lygia participated initially, with fantastic texts on phenomenology, which was the dominant philosophy being stated at the time. But neither of these critics went along with Lygia after 1963. Mario Pedrosa did as a friend, but he could not understand what was happening there.

An interesting detail is that one of the people I filmed for the project titled *Las 66 personas*, as Mario Pedrosa is no longer with us, was his daughter, who is currently the Brazilian Ambassador in France, designated by the Lula Government. I was able to film Ferreira Gullar. This was very interesting, as, with the rupture of the Neoconcretist movement, he broke away totally from Lygia and the entire movement, and was even exiled clandestinely in up to four different countries. As we say in Latin America, during that time he moved from one exile to another. Ferreira Gullar started by telling me that the return to the body and sensations in contemporary art obeys this absence of thought. I humbly told him that I believe just the opposite: it is because thought has dominated that we have to return to the aesthetic experience and the body, in order to reactivate the imagination. And this is what Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica were doing; a subject that, in a certain way, continued the phenomenology of the fifties, but with other openings. This was a very emotional moment in the interview, because he even shed tears, understanding the unfolding of pictorial and sculpture production towards body research. The second interesting thing about this critic is the fact that, when I filmed Jards Macalé, a fantastic musician with the same superstar career as Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, although I don't believe he is very well known here... Well, Macalé carried out a project with Lygia Clark that lasted over two years, and I wanted to know what remained of it. He told me that once, at home during the dictatorship, the Federal police asked him if he knew how to swim, and it is a fact that the police in Rio de Janeiro dumped people in the open ocean to practise swimming. At that moment Macalé had a psychotic episode and they decided to take him to Lygia's apartment and studio. She turned off the light, gave him a *lecsotin*, gave him the objects and a book by Ferreira Gullar called *El Poema Sucio* (*The Dirty Poem*). Macalé began to read the book and felt panic. He did not come out of shock for two days.

And I wondered why the relational object was the book by Ferreira Gullar in this case. I was in exile in Paris and was unaware of it, but the thing is that Ferreira Gullar was in his fourth exile in Buenos Aires, in a precarious state, threatened with death and with the military coup about to take place in Argentina. It seems that Ferreria was captured by a poetic fury and wrote the entire book in one week without sleeping. Well, the question is why *El Poema Sucio* had been the relational object used by Lygia Clark to bring Macalé out of shock at that time. Because this book reflects the state of terror during creation. The experience of creation is associated to the experience of terror, and this is worse than any dictatorship censoring, because in censorship, in spite of everything, you continue creating in your mind. Yet when you associate in memory the movement of creation with the danger of suffering the consequences of terror in your body, as a matter of survival the creative movement is inhibited, it becomes paralysed.

A person like Macalé, who is a great musician, poet, a fantastic person, saw his creative capacity paralysed and turned psychotic by dictatorial persecution. But when Lygia gave him *El Poema Sucio*, he learned that it is possible to create even in the most terrifying context and experience.

In sum, there are many things that could be said about Ferreira Gullar. In his interview he was very sincere because he told us: ‘When I broke away from art and the group and left the militants, it was because I was afraid of the radicality we were veering towards, and for this reason I could not go with them.’

**Paulo Herkenhoff** It is, I believe, when Pedrosa entered exile in Chile that he said two things that reveal these attitudes. With the first he underlines the exhaustion of Brazilian modernism: ‘At a time of crisis it is necessary to be on the side of the artists,’ he said. This was absolutely important as a moral figure. The second thing he made us understand is what production is, how art develops as an exercise of freedom under a dictatorship.

**Nuria Enguita Mayo** I would like to intervene in this discussion among Brazilians. Paulo says that museum structures are very weak, but he proves on the other hand that there is an extremely interesting modernism and tradition in Brazil that generated fundamental figures, but also created a context and existence for museums when here, at that time, we didn’t even know what they were.

**Audience** I think that the debate on Lygia Clark has been wonderful, thank you for the presentation. I have also enjoyed this to-and-fro debate, very revealing as well. I would like to see if I can extrapolate from here something associated with the subject of the museum, because I think that what you have been presenting brings up something I thought of during Buchloh’s talk and which has to do with our total vision of museums, you know? Those versed in psychoanalysis know the experience of falling in love is an experience in which you have a link with another person that permits you a type of internal disorganisation in your own psyche, and at that moment, trusting the other person, you open out completely to a new figuration and experience an epiphany, a new type of experiencing. When I think of the traditional role played by the museum, I think that the museum is, in essence, like a frame, in the way it standardises what could be a very bothersome experience or content. The problem for us,

and this is something that Paulo alluded to, is summed up by Freud when in *Civilisation and its Discontents* he mentions an inherent conflict between the impulse of the individual psyche and the restrictions of society, which somehow creates something more or less like a permanent avant-garde situation, although the museum plays an important role in this reaction, perhaps the most important one. The case of Lygia Clark is so interesting because of the question of how to bring the immediateness of such an experience, which is so deeply embedded in the body, to a type of reality, let us say, suitable for the visitor of the museum after the death of the artist, without the presence or ability of the artist to restage these performances. How do you do this in a museum? And I believe that this is something I would like you to discuss. What do we do in a museum that enables us greater freedom and personal reorganisation but, at the same time, makes use of the security in the framework of the museum you are debating?

**Suely Rolnik** I agree with a lot of the things you've said, but I will talk later because I have already talked too much.

**Nuria Enguita Mayo** Perhaps Muntadas can say something regarding what happens when the artist disappears, which is what we are talking about here finally. The case of Lygia Clark is an extreme limit, of course.

**John Beverley** I felt that among the three of you a direction was being pointed that could be a common strategy, but it could also not be so. I would like to know what the members of the panel share in common and what they do not of the three proposals stated here.

**Antoni Muntadas** To recap on what was said, I believe that there are not only the cases of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, who have been the two artists most rediscovered and revitalised in the past two years. I would direct this problem or question to other artists. I believe the work by Joseph Beuys poses great problems in presentation. Also Broodthaers. If the institution when it exhibits does not distinguish works defined as such from documents, and the curator does not clarify the interpretation from his or her point of view as mediator and as a subjective element through texts, I believe we find ourselves facing a complex problem. I don't perceive the work by James Lee Byars outside its own body element, performance carried to the extreme. We could also note the more recent case of Félix González-Torres, in spite of the fact that he did create several scores to be interpreted by others. Anyway, from the point of view of the museum how the artist's work should be interpreted when, besides, the work is not defined by the object in itself (and I go back to the idea of artefact), represents a great problem. It would be interesting to hear other opinions.

**Nuria Enguita Mayo** I will now give the floor to Jean-François...

**Jean-François Chevrier** Yes, we can distinguish between work and activity. With an artist such as Lygia Clark, who is an artist of activity, we do not realise that a work is exhibited in a different way. When we exhibit an activity there is both the document and the activity. We can choose the document or the model of the musical score.



Nothing else, I don't know what else to say. We could talk for hours and hours, but I believe that from a technical point of view this is something simple. If we are talking about exhibition, well it is necessary to do this well, and nothing else, as in many instances the documents are not exhibited correctly. There are not very many solutions: either we show the documents of the activity or we attempt to exhibit the work in a different way. Thus this is done either correctly or not. But technically speaking, this would be the solution.

**Suely Rolnik** One of the reasons I did the exhibition on Lygia Clark was the fact that cultural capitalism was, in a word, a rebuff to counter-culture, to flexible subjectivity (as opposed to identificatory subjectivity), to freedom of experiment and creation. For me the problem is that the manner and politics of subjectivity, of creation and relating to other things such as capitalism, is in format identical to the movements of the sixties and seventies. Thus today it is a political matter to distinguish between the two areas. This distinction is not a matter of remembrance of forms, documents or actions, but rather the production of a memory of experience, thereby making it possible to distinguish its ethical content and be flexible, experimental, with freedom to improvise. I believe this is a fundamental matter today: we must work on cultural politics from the point of view of clinical politics, reactivate the power of what was experienced during the sixties and seventies, not be war heroes nor copy it, but rather produce the memory of that power of cultural creation in an everyday way, breaking from today's bourgeois lifestyle. I find that fundamental.

**Nuria Enguita Mayo** To sum up, now we have three modes: document, reconstitution and evaluation or reactivation of the effects. Any more questions?

**Carlota Álvarez Basso** Hello, I would like to make three short comments off the cuff. In the first place, I congratulate the table, because I found its three slants thrilling. In the second place, a comment to Suely, as I seem to perceive a certain irony in her comment about being in a meeting organised by the association of directors of museums of contemporary art in Spain. Well, I want to tell you that the fact this was set up by such an association is a symptom of two things. First, there are enough museums of contemporary art in Spain to allow for such a group, and ADACE now has twenty-one members. Second, in Spain there are still enough elements missing to make it necessary for an association of professionals to organise this meeting. So there are these two slants, a positive and a negative one. And, after this, about Muntada's talk, and his intervention regarding how performative works can be reactivated once the artist is no longer present, I would like to comment that as long as there is a score and a curator to interpret the work, in a certain way the artists leave things behind that are well packaged. But before the existence of scores and interpreters, all of us who have worked in management practices found ourselves dealing with the families of artists who have their own interpretations of how the work should be installed. I think, from the smiles I see around me, that we have all suffered from the families. There's the widow, who usually emerges as author, semi-author or demiurge who knows how the work should be mounted; the offspring, even nephews, distant relations and great-grandchildren, who impose rules about how the work should be installed. Fortunately, today it is the curators and the artists themselves who finally

leave behind norms, instructions, scores, about how the work should be installed. I say fortunately, because until a few years ago this was something the families were in charge of.

**Suely Rolnik** Regarding my irony about the directors' meeting, I only meant that this is the fifth time I've come to Spain this year, which is because in Spain things are really happening in this area of discussion, and I am delighted to do so.

**Audience** Good afternoon. I see at the table various agents who act or are involved in museum institutions: commissioners, critics, artists. But curiously the great star is missing, the last end-user of museum activity: society, or properly speaking, the audience. We have talked about marginalisation: capitalism generates marginality, and I ask myself to what degree the museum as an institution of contemporary art is aware of a certain intellectual marginality. Is it perhaps not forgetting the social dimension of propitiating an experience and generating an entire series of mechanisms within the institution itself for this experience to be possible? In other words, knowledge is cumulative; it derives from a series of previous experiences. But this should, and can, open the museum to the non-specialist audience. All this has to do with this morning's subject: the museum as a space for regeneration, when the discussion was about authoritarianism. I think that at times there are certain hidden authoritarianisms, or at least a lack of kindness, towards the audience ignorant of or not too familiar with contemporary culture.

That is the first part of my question. Another part relates to all the disparities suffered by the institution: from the political area, with intrusions and budget cutbacks, but here again there is another question: how do our museum institutions operate internally? Are they democratic spaces in which the teams, the people who form them, have a voice and a vote, or is it more of a pyramid plan? Sometimes I feel that criticism of the external world should also be addressed to the inside of our institutions. So, I suggest that you, the directors who organised this symposium, carry out a self-criticism; a self-criticism of the actual mechanisms of your internal operation, which are not visible to society, but do represent certain authoritarianism. Thank you. I urge you to formulate your opinions, even though perhaps I've opened a Pandora's box that is tremendously delicate, I don't know.

**Nuria Enguita Mayo** When we attempted a reconstruction of Lygia Clark's proposals at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, we took great care in the manner of reconstruction: both in the document as well as in possible experimentation. We brought over people from Rio who could teach other people, and it was really a very interesting experience. It was always full, it was not at all elitist nor authoritarian, and also it was possible to encourage the phantasmatic element of these experiences, such as the anthropophagic slime or cannibalism, which I must say for some reason were not as successful in other places in Europe as in Barcelona. The participants in this debate are not museum directors. These conferences are geared to professionals: all the professionals here now could talk about the strategies of approaching the public, of their interest in reaching a qualified audience, but also the restatement of the relationship of art and education. Because art, like many other manifestations, is neither literal nor direct, and needs learning as well as mediation. We can contribute to that. Perhaps it can be discussed

in future round tables.

If there are no further questions, I would like to ask Jean-François to talk about the potential of the document as opposed to the testimony for the reconstruction, circulation and evocation of history. I think the implication you mentioned – the start of the document associated with territory and territorial research – is sometimes forgotten, and how a document, even if now a historic one, is always a historic document later, but not beforehand.

**Jean-François Chevrier** As to the question of the audience that has been raised, I believe we should trust the visitors to the exhibition, and not systematically substitute explanatory panels for the work. There is a great tendency today to explain everything. And, well... all of us have learnt what this produces: visitors who read the panel and then move on to check out the work of art to see what they have just read. I believe this is catastrophic. Behind this idea is a demagogic attitude, paternalistic and totally patronising. In the name of anti-elitism we produce disrespect. I really believe this; I believe we are producing total confusion. I have always been told that I am very elitist because I don't like to explain things in this way. On the contrary, I prefer to explain myself in writing and make the relationship with the works understandable and perceptible, because I believe that direct relations with works of art do much more than any written text. Why? Well, because I believe that a direct relationship with the work of art produces an experience for each visitor. I say that because it is a matter constantly debated.

There is another confusion regarding the word 'popular'. It is usually said that something is popular when it has great success. For me it is incredible that these language confusions take place. I believe linguistic problems are important. Again, we talk of museums without making a distinction between museums and art centres. I think that mixing them all together sometimes makes us not know what we are talking about. I always think of Hannah Arendt, who said that fascism begins with a confusion of terms. Don't misunderstand me; I don't mean to say that we're talking about fascism here this afternoon, but I do wish to insist that we must take a lot of care with the words we use and distinguish the terms correctly. We must never allow 'popular' to be a synonym for successful, just as in distinguishing between 'public' and 'audience' there is an incredible confusion – incredible because, for example, audience levels are measured to say something is popular. We are using the terms erroneously, which leads to a situation of total intellectual corruption. Our mindset for discourse is totally wrong, and we must pay attention to this.

**Antoni Muntadas** Regarding the idea of supplying information on the work, I totally agree that the work should speak for itself. But we have been facing this problem ever since the Documenta commissioned by Harald Szeemann. That Documenta established a pattern of how to present conceptual and minimalist works in a period when there were no ways to present it, after several Documentas, Manifests, the Biennials of São Paulo, etc. There were works that were not works which had visual confrontation, solely formal or sensorial, but had to be activated by involving the audience on a perceptive level. They were works created outside the museum and moved into it. And there was a need yet to be solved, of thinking of the presentation of those works. The latest Biennial of São Paulo, which ends soon, is a biennial that wants to use a very

different situation from the previous ones and aligns itself with a very questionable position concerning the works: these are works in process and on site, that were not available for a certain situation. I am not talking about elitism now. I believe that the work should be able to explain itself, yet there are works that are not conceived for a museum and are still waiting for a formula. This formula is a problem to be solved by the museum, the mediator and the curator.

I believe there is a confusion, Jean-François. When you said that a document needs to be placed on the wall like a work of art, I totally agree with you, but this should not be confused with another type of information about the work, which states another dynamic regarding the viewer. If there is no reference to the context of the work, the attempt for it to rest solely on its formal value implies another presentation. The great problem of the Biennial of São Paulo, what failed most, was the display, the presentation of the work. As they are, to put it one way, visually poor works, it is necessary to be involved to a much higher degree in their style of presentation. I think it is important for you to understand what I am saying, Jean-François, before answering.

**Suely Rolnik** I would like to say something along the line of what you have just mentioned. I think there are two problems. One is how this work is exhibited in the setting of a biennial or museum. But more important to me is the type of intervention or artistic practice that acts in public life. For me it is a mistake to take the information about what happened there, because the work in this case is the event that took place there, as in the example of your intervention in the Biennial, where you attempted a way to produce an event in the Biennial itself, researching its history, revealing its images, etc. You brought proposals from other previous places, but you also carried out an intervention in the Biennial itself. This type of work only makes sense if it attempts a way to reactivate the critical potential in the institution in which it is presented. If not, it is simply a piece of news about something that happened in another space, and so is of no interest.

**Antoni Muntadas** I think that after seeing the Biennial of de São Paulo, you know exactly what I am saying. There are works that cannot be sustained without backing. And, as I said, a number of years have elapsed, perhaps like in the eighties, when research was being carried out on how to present a type of work that needs to be activated in a different way from that of the presentation of minimalist or conceptual works. How? I don't know... I believe it is a problem, and we are in a forum where it is important to think about it.

**Jean-François Chevrier** It is necessary to put poems, not documents, into the quality of work. I believe it is necessary to take into account information and documentation on the one hand, and the work of art on the other. I will explain this so it is clear. The document is not necessarily retroactive. We can imagine an artist, whoever, who works producing, manufacturing documents as an artist. I can mention two very obvious examples: Walker Evans, the North American photographer, and the Russian writer Varlam Shalamov, author of an extraordinary documentary work of short tales in which he recounts his experience of the Stalinist system from the perspective of producing documents that at the same time are works of art and

which, in this association, constitute a work. There is a solution that has not lost its modernity in any way and that enables an artist to place himself in this situation. The situation is serious, but not desperate. There are many artists who work within this perspective, but are not frequently exhibited. For this solution to work it is necessary to consider the document not as something secondary to the work, nor as an alternative either: in other words, it is necessary to consider a third status of the document as regards to the work. It should be neither a complement to the work nor an alternative to the work. How to situate the document then? In the first place, in considering a document I believe it should not be confused either with documentation or documentary. Documentary is a genre and documentation is a functional production, a set of functional data.

The document does not need to be functional, and when it arises, it appears where we do not expect it. The document does not necessarily arise from documentation, nor is it produced by a specialist in documentaries. On the other hand, in the word document there is the idea of singularity. A document is singular, and this is what links it with the work of art.

The document is also specific; it cannot be simply reduced to its documental contents, it usually goes beyond that. It is an object of multiple interpretations, the same as the work of art, without reducing its documental contents. All these elements show that in the document there is a very particular quality. It is an object, an artefact, an idea of artefact, which we cannot classify in existing categories of culture. At any rate, I think it is very difficult to reduce the document to its information, whatever it may be, and I think it is difficult to affirm that the document should be systematically treated in a way that enables the visitor to... I don't know how to explain it. I am going to put it this way: when staging an exhibition it is important to produce a document in such a way that the visitor can see that it is a document, but at the same time let himself or herself be carried away by the document beyond the documental field. This is rather difficult to explain, but it is a very practical idea. A strong document takes us out of the simple experience of reception of documental content; other things are produced and one goes beyond that. These other things, which are not a work of art nor alternatives to the work of art (and I don't want to go any further) are something one has to work with in an experimental way. This is what I try to do regarding this practice. However, we have progressed very little in this area.

I believe the conceptual period is interesting, and can be reconsidered today, now we are distanced enough to do so. Retrospectively, we are aware that during the conceptual period there were very few documents produced, as I explained. There are also very few documents that today retain a meaning, a force, an interest. Now then, as they are out of the process in which they were produced it is necessary to go back to that same process. In other words, there are very few documents that have transcended the process in which they were produced, and which have gained a capacity of singularity and specificity. This is the situation, although we would have to be more precise.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** I would like to say something very simple. I think that in a certain way, we are asking a phenomenological vision of the object. Each object, depending on the situation, begs us for a different solution. To go back to what Muntadas was saying, I would like to point out something about the Biennial of São Paulo. I believe it is the first Biennial of São Paulo of the twenty-first century: a biennial which

confronts everything the Brazilian State is, Brazilian society, which is a society of exclusion. We are at a crucial ethical moment in Brazil. There are words and words written on the wall. I am not very much in agreement with you, Jean-François. For example we know that in the Biennial of São Paulo over 40% of the visitors come to a cultural institution for the first time. This is not only a discovery, but it is a matter of crossing the exclusion line and the class difference that is so ingrained. I believe there are moments when the texts need to shelter people. I don't believe this is populism, but rather an offering of instruments for interpretation.

**Ute Meta Bauer** I just want to recall one more basic matter, and I would like you all to appreciate the distinction I want to make. I believe that we need to be more precise when talking about the museum, and today we have to distinguish between public and private museums, and what the collection represents and who is speaking through this collection. The object, once again, is not neutral. There is a great difference according to which collection the same object is in, and in conceptual art and even any other type of art, I think that we have to reconsider that we can see the author but not read him or her. This is valid for both historic and contemporary art. In retrospect, I think how we address the visitor is crucial. I think it is very important to enable the visitors to be accomplices in the way we want them to participate in art.

**Jean-François Chevrier** When we progress from the information of the document, beyond the documentary, in other words, beyond documentation, and consider the document outside the documentation, we realise that it is another concept. What I am saying is something learned from practice, not theory; we realise that the document leads to the experience, this concept of experience that is so difficult to use. This is one of those extremely difficult-to-define words, although there have been great philosophical texts on experience. But it is truly difficult to define, and it is a word which we cannot avoid if we want to continue. Documents such as the *Tales of Kolymá* by Shalamov, are at the same time artistic elaborations, we don't have a contradiction between document and work in them. In these cases, we can talk about a document of experience. It is necessary to be precise about what type of documents we are talking about: the art document is very clear, either it matches the work of art or substitutes for it. In the nineteenth century it had this meaning: the document is auxiliary, it accompanies and complements the work, or substitutes for it, because it is something that comes from a non-Western space – we are talking about the Colonial era – or is historic art. But here I want to talk about the document of experience and not the document of art. We must work here from this concept. Shalamov wrote a marvellous letter, through which the West was made aware of Stalinist totalitarianism. Shalamov reviews a series of errors committed by the witnesses of Kolymá. We enter the matter of testimony. He makes a list of mistakes because he wishes to be very precise, as he wishes to produce a document, a document of his experience, which implies it has to be truthful, to have values of truth. Here is the dichotomy between experience and truth. He says certain people are not being precise, the information they are giving out is false. In the end he admits: this is not a problem, it is criticisable because they lack talent. It is incredible, he goes so far as to say, because a good historical document is not simply a document of expe-

rience or truthfulness, but must also be a document capable of producing a new shape, and that is why talent is so important.

For this reason, today we must be able to judge documents. For example, in the photographic area we do not have to judge them solely on their documentary value or of experience, but also depending on criteria and their pictorial shape. These three aspects are very important and correspond to what Shalamov mentions when he talks about talent. For example, this is the problem of critical art, as there are artists who produce critical discourses in invalid forms; the procedure was valid but not the form of the image: they produced forms without quality or resistance. It is through this type of form that a language that prohibits, that blocks experience, can be reintroduced. Hence Shalamov's comment: the document of experience is the true document, and it is also a form. There we are very close to the work of art, we have the opportunity to redefine the work. We consider that the concept of historic art no longer holds such a value and that we can redefine it with a slight shift in the cultural field.

**Audience** Hello, good afternoon. I wish to thank the panel for its clarifications, and its conceptual leap with regard to the previous one. I appreciate the sense of what Ute was saying: the certain naturalisation of the object has to be taken into account. It is not possible to naturalise the object, in the same way it is not possible to naturalise the document. Let us not now turn the document into a fetish that could reconstruct historic memory, when what we need to do is activate another series of memory policies, above all, in Spain. Here I make an interjection, because Suely mentioned in her intervention certain contexts of the dictatorship in Brazil, of which little has been read from the point of view of the artistic practice, and even less so from that of the museum with respect to certain artists, particularly in the Spanish context. This is a task yet to be done, and this is what I meant by the politics of memory. My question is for Chevrier. I would like to ask him what danger could he perceive in the conversion of the document into a fetish, as the document ends up belonging to a file, a file that has an order and certain disorder or entropy.

**Jean-François Chevrier** Thank you very much for your question, because in fact I had forgotten to clarify the relationship with the archives. As I perceive it, the document does not end up in the archives. What is produced in art now is very interesting, and I am not as pessimistic as I may seem. We are being freed now from this terrible idea of the archives, the octopus that reaches all and where everything ends, all ends up in the archives, like the cemetery. The archives are the equivalent of the common graves of the Middle Ages, and like Artaud, I believe we have to finish with this last judgement and finish with archives. I think the document can have another life and effect, and not end up in the archives, in the common grave. For this reason, I would like to mention the production of the documents. When Shalamov writes *The Tales of Kolymá*, these do not end up in the archives, no way. Shalamov's documents are documents written from experience and truth which have a form, exist and are to be inscribed in the history of literature, of art, but also will be inscribed in a documental history about the phenomenon of Kolymá. I don't believe there is a crisis in this sense, but rather a renovation of what is written.

I recently saw an artist who reinvents documentary language. It is incredible, I didn't think that an artist today could reinvent a documentary, and I am talking about the



documentary genre, not conceptual art based on documentaries. For me this was unthinkable. She does so from the logic of poetic practice of the document based on language, and works on the form. The archive, let us say, is not the natural place for the document. Naturalising the document is to say that the archive is its place. Well, I believe this is not true. In the current cultural mobility, there is no space for the document that could be the archive as opposed to the collection, for example. This morning an archival practice was evoked that is opposite to that of the work of art, and really, Benjamin Buchloh forgot to mention that the archive of Marcel Broodthaers also works with the idea of the collection. The archive is not separable from the collection in Broodthaers. The concept of collection is very important. Walter Benjamin, for example, talks about collection, not archive. The archive is not the archive that Foucault defined. Foucault defined the archive precisely against the work of art, and this is pretty good, you remember? It seems that we only remember that, but that is not valid today, everything has changed. We are no longer in that situation; we must not place the archive in opposition to the work. The notion of collection is very different from that of the archive and deserves to be restated, rearticulated and reactivated. For a historian, on the other hand, the notion of archive is still indispensable to study history. For me it is, when I write history and seek out historic events. However, the document, how it is produced and the way I define it, forces the archives to be redefined.

## WHAT HISTORY ARE WE TELLING?

## HOW ARE NARRATIONS BUILT?

MAIN SPEAKER: MIEKE BAL

OTHER PARTICIPANTS: BEATRIZ HERRÁEZ,  
ALLAN SEKULA

MODERATOR: JAVIER GONZÁLEZ DE DURANA

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**Javier González de Durana** We are going to start this morning's session. This session comes when we are halfway through this summit, in which, from my point of view, all the goals the organisers had pursued have been achieved, in other words: that it be a debate summit, a confrontation of ideas, of sharing positions with Spanish professionals in museum activities, along with colleagues from other territories which will bring a sum of different tonalities, of voices, of different accents from those we are used to hearing in Spain (an aspect that is rarely produced in congresses or similar summits, with interests that at times are corporate and not very fertile). Now, having reached the halfway mark, we can verify that there have been interesting positions regarding the ideas confronted, and equally, many questions. At times the answer is not as important as a well-framed question.

The summit is moving from generalities (the case of the first theoretical contributions) to particulars (especially the works of Lygia Clark and Antoni Muntadas, for example). I believe this is the tone we need to keep up. Not lose sight of the general ideas, concepts, large thought frameworks, yet at the same time be on ground level at times so as not get lost in the cloudy heights.

Today's topic is *What history are we telling? How are narrations built?* In anticipation of some of the things that may be dealt with by the speakers, and I don't know what course the debate will take, we can state matters we have quite frequently dealt with in commissariats and museums. For example, whether writing the word and showing the object are two ways of exhibiting, ways of calling out to reach collaborators; yet at the same time, if words and the object can, at times, finally confront each other and defend opposite discourses. We can also ask ourselves whether the use of certain linguistic terminology by commissioners and curators and critics is any more than a fashionable resource to ratify the unilateral power that certain exhibition producers have: more than questioning, to reinforce, precisely. We can also ask about matters such as narrative versus literality, if the discursive intention opposes, denies or can go hand in hand with the formal description, or if both are things that must go separately, in what conditions can they go together.

## NARRATING ART? SOME DISCONTINUOUS REFLECTIONS MIEKE BAL

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In this paper I respond explicitly to the programmatic issues raised in the invitation to the conference. These issues are indicated by simple numerals.

1) '*La figura del narrador en el caso de la exposiciones es evidente en su propia estructura.*'

But is it? Not all speech is narrative.

In my book *Double Exposures* (1996) I argued along these same lines, and yet today I want to qualify this statement a bit. To be sure, expositions are presentations of art that convey something about that art; they can be considered speech acts. But is this always a narrative? When we speak of exhibitions as narratives, or as conveying stories, we are using a double metaphor. Acting with objects, arranging and displaying them, is likened to linguistic utterances. And these utterances, of all possible speech genres, are considered narrative.

When used casually, such a metaphor may obscure more than it reveals. Not just any communication, linguistic or not, is narrative in structure. In contrast, when specified and as a guideline for conceptualising exhibitions, such a metaphor becomes conceptual, and can thus be a methodological tool of great usefulness. Implicitly and sometimes explicitly, curators use such metaphors to invent novel coherences for shows so that they no longer fall back on predictable models; while critics can reflect on the consequences of such metaphors and explain these to their readers.<sup>57</sup>

In this paper I will explore the potential contribution as well as the risks of these conceptual metaphors, and thus doubly frame the specific metaphor of narrative. Negatively, I aim to reflect on exhibition practice 'beyond' the art-historical paradigm of chronology, movements, and monographic presentations – all deeply steeped in the metaphor of narrative. ('La historia del arte clásica, que trataba de situar la obra de arte en su contexto original, no tiene sentido en este contexto.') In the negative, foremost in my view is the nationalism that is still rampant in exhibition practice. Cultural causality becomes nationalism. The link between nationalism and narrative is the interpretation of that narrative element par excellence, the narratorial voice. From authoritative, this voice must be made sensitive and explicitly show its limited perspective; and from singular, it must become plural, whether or not the actual work is done in collaboration between different curators.

I take the curatorial team, or any group participating in mounting an exhibition, to be an 'exhibitionary agent' – a kind of speaker not primarily with words but with things. Like speaking, exhibiting is both showing and hiding: one way of showing an object makes another interpretation invisible. So, on one hand, there is an agent, a 'speaker'. But again, is this always, specifically, a narrator?

If we think of metaphors that have served as models to conceive and subsequently explain exhibitions of this kind, other literary models than narrative have been fre-

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57 On conceptual metaphors, see my study on the subject. (2002)

quently invoked. Rudi Fuchs, for example, called his interventionist exhibitions ‘couplets’, using a name derived from poetry to characterise what can be considered visual poems, based on regularities between contrasts and repetitions. This poetic model attunes the visitor to the various grounds of repetition that, in turn, foreground difference: in style, colour, scale, theme, medium, and, indeed, thought. But beyond such specific associations, poetry also evokes the idea of subtlety, nuance, sensory effect.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the metaphor of poetry can be fruitful. Thus, fringe repetitions derived from rhyme and assonance, but also tropes such as metaphor and metonymy, the two privileged figures of poetry, are useful tools to build up ensembles that require some form of coherence after the demise of the predictable art-historical narrative coherence of chronology. Two examples from Régis Michel’s series in the Louvre can illustrate the tropes that are poetry’s favorites. Kristeva’s exhibition *Visions capitales* in the Louvre in 1998 was entirely based on the metaphor of its title. This metaphor is based on the figure of syllepsis, the conflation of two meanings in a single phrase, neither of which is necessarily ‘literal’. Here, ‘capitals’ qualifies ‘importance’ and ‘punishment’, two elided nouns. As a result, the noun ‘visions’ means both perspective, as in intellectual vision, and display, as in optical vision. As a result of this literary figure, the unusual but highly illuminating metaphor that conflated the vision incarnated in the genre of the portrait with the theme of beheading so frequent in Western mythology, brought to the art gathered in the Hall Napoléon a philosophical reflection of a level uncommon in art exhibitions of such great popular appeal.

Like Kristeva’s show, Derrida’s *Mémoires d’aveugle*, shown seven years earlier in the same venue, exploited an ambiguity of its concept, this time to establish a *metonymic* relation between an artistic issue – the limitations of sight – frequently represented in history painting and drawings, and an epistemological one – the limitations of the possibility of knowledge. Thus, using metonymy as trope, the exhibition offered in-depth thought on the traditional bond between knowledge and seeing, it ruptured the commonly assumed causal determinism between the two, and insisted on the importance of memory in both.

In this vein, the notion that an exhibition is a form of poetry becomes a principle of creative curating. In a culture where art stands for innovation and for the exploration of the not-yet-known, poetry is an appropriate metaphor, not because art *is* a form of poetry, but because it has precisely those qualities in common with poetry that make its artistic qualities most visible.

Here is an example from the last exhibition during her lifetime, in 2004, of Marthe Wéry’s abstract paintings in the exuberant art nouveau museum in Tournai. The subtle relationship between rules and the wavering between obedience and transgression is comparable to poetry’s exploitation and transgression of grammar: the building, or the curator, offers a frame that is itself deviating from the rule the building has established. The curator responds not by adapting but by enfolding the paintings within the wall space, enhancing the latter’s grammatical deviation by slightly modifying the hanging on the other, more rule-obedient walls. The hanging of the series, in the end, established a tension with this particular wall, in its turn in tension with the other walls. But conforming to the subtlety of poetry, this tension is slight, and light. Thereby, the overall sense of the poetic is not damaged but enhanced.

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58 For a historical approach to the ‘literariness’ of museums, see Didier Maleuvre (1999). More literally conceived, the relationship between language and exhibitions is touched upon in Gaby Porter (1991).

## 2) Narrative is a specific discourse that visitors produce

This issue sheds light on the specific status of the frequently alleged conceptual metaphor of narrative, now from the spectator's side. I explored the potential of this metaphor in an earlier study, devoted to the ways in which exhibitions produce a narrative. The issue is not so much the curatorial voice, but the production of a narrative by the visitor. To summarise briefly, the visitor follows an itinerary with a beginning and an end, and over time, according to specific rhythms and along particular 'events' that emerge at the junctures of the interaction between the visitor and the objects. The encounters, sometimes slowed down, sometimes sped up by means of juxtapositions and captions, are always 'directed' or, as narrative theory would have it, *focalised*, by the expository agent.<sup>59</sup>

In general, this narrative dimension is inevitable, for every visitor moves about the space in time. The point is to make this narrative of the itinerary as an experience work in a creative, and not a confining or 'bossy' manner. Here, as in the case of poetry, the conceptual metaphor itself produces possibilities for both creative curating and critical understanding. For example, once the idea central to this metaphor has come up – that the encounters between particular works constitute events produced by presentation ploys – this insight can further a self-conscious and, hopefully, self-critical approach to hanging and caption-writing, inspiring more sophisticated, surprising, ambiguous and artistically dense invitations to encounters.

In my earlier study I was mainly looking at accidental effects, using the metaphor as a critical tool. One example was the felicitous hanging of two Caravaggios and one Baglione painting in the former Gemäldegalerie in Berlin-Dahlem. This arrangement is no longer extant. I had been sensitised to this effect through an earlier investigation of the homosocial narrative underlying the presentation of European Impressionist art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where, incidentally, the walls had belatedly been turned into the same kind of prescriptive frames by a neo-classical refurbishing effort in the early 1990s. What seemed utterly predictable *there*, and exploitative of the traditional frames I have above compared to grammar, became *in Dahlem* the occasion for an innovative, stimulating reflection on visual culture once the narrative of sequence was played off against the requirements of a corner that interrupted the sequence. When I was invited, years later, to curate a small show in the Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam, I decided to construct a postmodern, exploded, disorienting narrative where no itinerary was pre-mapped.<sup>60</sup>

There are two ways in which exhibitions as such – the specific combination of *this* building with *these* artworks arranged in *this* way – *counters*, or rather modifies, exhibition narrativity. One is a pluralisation of narratorial 'voices' and directives that activate the viewer's own initiative. Second, the narrative nature of 'events of viewing' cannot be integrated as easily as usual in a narrative whole. The micro-narratives can remain loosely framed, embedded in sequences that do not lead up to an overall narrative itinerary.

<sup>59</sup> See my study on exhibitions (1996). A recent exhibition analysis according to this model can be found in Ernst van Alphen's catalogue essay (2003).

<sup>60</sup> On the wilful anachronism in the refurbishing of the galleries in the MET, see Gary Tinterow's justification in the brochure (1993). For the Dahlem and the Metropolitan displays, see my chapter 'The Talking Museum' (1996). On the exhibition in the Boijmans van Beuningen, see chapter 4 in Bal (2002). The analysis, there, is specifically based on the concept of *framing*, but it is easy to realise that the model of narrative is strongly present. An astute analysis of this exhibition can be found in Mark Denaci (2001).

Both in rhythm and rhyme, in 'grammar' and in tropes, the way the artworks are displayed can create precisely the kind of poetic tensions that activate visitors. This prepares the mindset and bodily engagement necessary for the kind of narrativity that eludes large plots but accrues micro-narratives in events where paintings and building collaborate and converse with each other. As a result two other conceptual metaphors I will briefly invoke in relation to exhibitions derived from the performing arts, emerge as the obvious continuation of this consideration of exhibitionary agency.<sup>61</sup>

### 3) *Theatricality as a frame shares aspects with narrative*

Theatre involves staging, fictionality, actors acting and, in these things combined, artifice. Art objects are staged like characters; figures are dressed up and act, performing roles for the visitor. Performance art, in this sense, is only a logical further step in an awareness of the dynamic nature of art. It is no coincidence that the adjectivised verb *moving* refers to both physical and emotional mobility. Fictionality and artificiality, in theory each other's counterparts, can both be naturalised, and hence remain unnoticed.

A tacit agreement between curator and visitor entails a willing suspension of disbelief. This definition of fictionality applies to exhibitions. According to traditional models based on art-historical authority, this fictionality is only naturalised, not eliminated. This makes exhibitions that are modelled on scholarship, and often intimidating in their display of a knowledge the viewer does not have, so difficult to resist and therefore, so damaging for the viewers' autonomy of mind. Like realistic novels, such exhibitions perform the make-believe that undermines critical dialogue. These exhibitions deploy narrative as the tale told by the authority of the single curatorial voice. Second, the display of art objects is just as artificial as a play watched in the dark. Exhibitions use lighting just as much as the theatre does. And, as in theatre but less statically, visitors respond to what they see, emotionally as well as intellectually. If the curator then exploits the three key elements of theatre that motivate the metaphor to begin with – that is, actors, the artificiality of fiction, and the appeal to the audience – more daring, experimental, less traditional exhibitions result.<sup>62</sup>

Theatricality, when deployed with creativity, can function to activate, surprise, and sometimes worry a public never far from suspense and laughter. This brings me to the second model derived from the moving image, which is cinema.

### 4) *Cinema as congenial with narrative is a very productive and subtle metaphor*

Film is a medium that shares features with narrative and with theatre, but has its own peculiarities as well. Less obviously but with more sophistication, I contend that exhibitions can work with such cinematic devices as close-ups, acceleration and slowdown, focus and blur, to name but a few, and appeal to those social-cultural phenomena

61 In a useful article Hans-Thiess Lehmann makes the move I am making here – using theatre and then involving landscape, as I will do below, in relation to theatrical textuality. Hans-Thiess Lehmann 1997a, 'From Logos to Landscape: Text in Contemporary Dramaturgy', *Performance Research* 2 (1): pp. 55-60. In another article of the same year, the author offers elements for the transition from narrative to body, which pertains to the metaphor of theatre as well as to those of narrative and body. Hans-Thiess Lehmann 1997b.

62 For a concise and clear overview of concepts in theatre analysis see Patrice Pavis (1998). On performance art see Rebecca Schneider (1997).

frequently used in film such as memory, affect, and suspense.

Art, like photography, is importantly 'of the surface', of texture rather than structure. And so are cinema and its partner and predecessor, photography. The glossy surface that, rather than suggesting an underlying depth, bounces the eye back, has fascinated many, including Roland Barthes, whose *Camera Lucida* opposes term by term the camera obscura of linear perspective, overview and illusory depth (1981). Cinema, as the most popular of arts, may be very effective in hiding its artificiality and superficiality, thanks to the particularly appealing mechanisms of identification that the viewing experience easily entails. But if in the least deconstructed, a film betrays itself as having been made out of minute shots, varying from close-up to long shot, medium shot, dissolves and fades, and work with focus.

Movement in vision: this is cinema's primary contribution to visual culture. The installation makes the question of what moves – whether it is the image itself, the figures within it, or the viewer who does the active looking – a central one. The metaphor of cinema helps us realise this. When the installation uses daylight, the light acts like the cinema: the temporal dictatorship of film that subjects its viewers to its pre-determined rhythm becomes a source of fictionality that might be termed the willing suspension of impatience.

I will complicate the use of metaphors derived from the different arts by considering the metaphor 'exhibition as film' in some more detail, through an exhibition that many of you may have seen or heard about, Ydessa Hendeles' *Partners* in the Haus der Kunst in Munich, in 2002. As the floorplan shows, there is no unique itinerary; any narrative experience comprises at least two moments of what Jorge Luis Borges would call 'forking paths'. ¿Cómo narramos? The answer is clear now: the narrative is 'postmodern', experimental. ¿Cómo se construyen las narraciones?: the narrator is the viewer and hence the narrations are by definition plural and unpredictable. To explain how we can nevertheless make the metaphor of the narrator richer in possibilities I will inflect it through a narrative genre, that of cinema. Specifically, since many of the works exhibited there are, or are derived from, photography, I suggest understanding *Partners* as a proposal to consider photography – the medium, the art – as a *storyboard* or visual scenario for a cinematic vision of art presentation. The narrator thus becomes a film director. I am particularly interested in this example because, while proposing a 'partnership' between the German and American peoples, and between the German and Jewish peoples, it managed an astounding undermining of nationalism.

The relationship between art and the politics of nationhood is introduced according to a particular aesthetic vision that ties the contemplation of art to a repositioning of the subject in relation to the world. For this, narratorial *authority* must yield to an appeal to *affect*.

##### 5) From narrative to cinema is also a foregrounding of affect over authority

The thrust of the cinematic vision at work in this exhibition is to establish, or at least to encourage, an *affective* relationship, not only between the art and the viewer but also between the artworks themselves. According to Deleuze, affect – conceived of as an intensity that can be transmitted – emerges between a perception that troubles us and an *action* we hesitate about. Photography, the key element in *Partners*, projects this relationship of affect as the possibility of translating heterogeneous emotions into





fig. 18 Marthe Wéry, *Tournai* 2004, courtesy of Micheline Szwajcer Gallery, exhibition *Les Couleurs du Monochrome*, Tournai, 2004.

each other. The common foundation on which such translation works is the notion that through art, it is possible to identify with other people's pasts as they lived them; in other words, to 'have' other people's memories.<sup>63</sup>

First, a further differentiation. Of the metaphors invoked so far, narrative, cinema and theatre share the element of plot – narrative content – but there is also a major difference between them. Instead of standing still in front of an imaginary stage, as in theatre, the viewer now walks through a forest of objects. And therefore, instead of being a spectator of the play, she is now a co-narrator, fulfilling in her own way the script that pre-determines the parameters within which the story can be told. This temporal dimension of exhibitions is the guiding principle of narratological analysis. As in reading a novel, where the reader accumulates an understanding and affective relationship with the events and characters, walking through an exhibition creates, in the experience of the visitor, a cumulative relationship with the art on display.

In this view, a narrative exhibition asks of the viewer that she establish connections as she moves through the exhibition, building up a 'story', which has, as its outcome, or *dénouement*, an effect. This effect is an impression that binds together the different experiences evolving from the confrontation with the artworks. Such shows need not have the typical coherence of traditional exhibitions. On the contrary, since they activate the viewer, compelling her to create rather than consume the exhibition-as-narrative, such shows can harbour heterogeneous objects that only cohere because of the narrative, which is constantly 'under construction'. *Partners* brings this art of storytelling, by means of a particular installation of objects, to a hitherto unsurpassed level of intensity. Like novels, exhibition narrative also achieves this effect by means of a specifically narrative rhetoric. Cinema, as the new art of the twentieth century – the century of this exhibition – is specifically relevant here for two reasons. First, it encompasses the three models I have just mentioned, binding them together: film requires *mise-en-scène*, unfolds narratives, and deploys poetic strategies to enforce its affective impact, slowing down the forward thrust of the plot – the building of (narrative) coherence. Second, and most importantly for my analysis, cinema is not simply a continuation of photography. Instead, cinema responds to photography, critically and ambivalently. This response concerns not only movement and time but also, more subtly, the insistence on the limits of visibility inherent in time, which cinema inscribes in the black intervals in and between frames. This has consequences for 'cinematic' exhibitions.<sup>64</sup>

#### *6) Through the frame, photography serves as a story-board for the cinematic exhibition*

Cinema takes off where photography reaches its literal limits: in the frame. Thus photography serves as cinema's scenario or story-board, and cinema is photography's commentary: a meta-photography. This is emphatically the case in *Partners*. With photography as its storyboard, this exhibition animates that visual scenario by means of cinematic strategies. These strategies include the obvious ones, such as

63 On this Deleuzian conception of affect and the possibility that affect is transmitted from objects to people, see Ernst van Alphen (2008). The idea of 'having other people's memories' is theorised by Kaja Silverman (1996).

64 The fundamental heterogeneity between frames, due to the black intervals separating each image from the next, turns serial photography into readable, not visible, images. See Doane (2002).

the construction of a space that is particular to the exhibition and offers connections to the outside world without coinciding with it; the tension between movement and time, each possessed by its own rhythm; and the deployment of stylistic figures that intensify the narrative and change its pace, such as those of montage (e.g. dissolves) and framing (e.g. close-ups).

The cinematic, that I contend is the soul of this exhibition comes to operate most powerfully at a few key junctures, of which I can only discuss one, which I contend answers the question ‘Qué papel juega el comisario y su relación con el hecho artístico?’

This is the transition between the entrance gallery and an art work that the curator-collector herself contributed as an artist, called *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)*. This immense photo archive of thousands of snapshots, studio pictures and other inconspicuous forms of photography, all uniformly matted and framed, is the heart of the exhibition, next to the entrance gallery if one elects to go straight ahead instead of turning left. Here, the collector ordered the wall-covering photographs according to taxonomies that repeat, and thus mock, nineteenth-century models of exhibiting, in the process slowing down the narrative to the extreme. All photographs have one element in common whose importance the artist – as I must now call her – has not found but created by her collecting acts: in each a teddy bear is visible.

The categories established here centre on these toys. One child, two children, twins with teddy bears; soldiers, sailors, hunters with teddy bears; women, dressed or naked, with teddy bears; children aiming sometimes adult-size rifles at small teddy bears. Bears in strollers or baby carriages, group portraits with a teddy bear, or babies competing with teddy bears in size and cuteness. Two galleries, with winding staircases in them, so that two floors of walls covered from ceiling to floor confine and hold the visitor in a necessarily time-consuming act of voyeurism, an intimacy with unknown people, most but not all of whom must be dead by now. After these two crowded galleries, a near-empty fourth one beckons.

In this next gallery, a sculpture of a young adolescent boy kneeling in a pose of prayer is all there is. It turns its back on those exiting the photo galleries. Slowed down by the time-consuming, indeed, time-halting, photo galleries, one is not in too much of a rush to see the boy’s face. Eventually, though, this moment becomes inevitable. The moment of total shock occurs when one walks through that third gallery to see the boy’s face. Indeed, it is when Cattelan’s sculpture *Him* enters the picture that, for me, the narrative model suddenly yields to the cinematic one. We encounter this sculpture when exiting the two crowded rooms of *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)*. The contrast between the intimate installation of the photo-archive, which invites us to dwell, explore, and remain in this installation-within-the-installation, and the lone figure seen from the back in an otherwise empty gallery, produces the estranging sense of a sharp cut between one episode and the next, set in a completely different space.

This contrast sets up an expectation of contrast on the level of content as well. Indeed, a sometimes convincing, sometimes deceptive, sense of comfort and safety is created by means of an old-fashioned, homey living room, illuminated by domestic lamps and over-written by the even more old-fashioned, nineteenth-century museum of natural history, with its odd classificatory drive and crowded showcases. This cosy ambience contrasts with the danger to which this child-size kneeling doll seems to be exposed. But the doll turns its back to us. This has the effect of pulling us closer, compelling us to approach, to walk to the other side, to see its face, bend over in the typical physical condescension

with which we approach children, people in wheelchairs, small people. Perhaps we seek to keep it company. The face is Hitler's. The sculpture, made by Maurizio Cattelan, is called *Him* (2001).

7) *A zoom-in from long shot to close-up works affectively*

The movement performed by the *viewer* is the kinetic equivalent of a zoom-in, from a long shot to a close-up. And, after we turn around and zoom in, the face we finally come to see – against the backdrop of the Teddy-Bear galleries that continue to beckon us – destroys any sense of safety, warmth, or comfort that may linger.

A Canadian Jewish curator, showing us Hitler in one of Germany's most history-laden buildings – how does this gesture address the dangers of nationalism, by means of a specifically cinematic-narrative aesthetic instead of a didactic statement? The tension between expecting a face we do not know and seeing one we do – one that half a century of taboos has taught us not to look straight into the face – creates a gripping sense of fear, if only for a split second. This face is cinematic, both symbolically and physically, in that it is an isolated close-up. I see it as a close-up indeed, but one abstracted from Hendeles' photo installation *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)* where it was visually absent, but constantly if implicitly evoked. Close-ups exaggerate photography, pushing realism to its limits, and sometimes beyond them, when the view comes so close that the image ceases to be legible, that the grain of the photograph and the grain of the skin become one, whereby the object recedes behind its representation. The close-up in cinema re-becomes photography but 'beyond' cinema: it stops time, undermining the linearity of temporality that the cinematic had just installed. This is the primary function of the close-up in film. It imposes a qualitative leap indifferent to linear time. And, since time and space are implicated in the same move, close-ups undermine spatial continuity as well. They are not aggrandisements of a segment of the image. Rather, they are abstractions, isolating the object from the time-space co-ordinates in which we were moving as if 'naturally'. A close-up immediately cancels the whole that precedes it, leaving us alone, thrown out of linear time, alone with a relationship to the image that is pure *affect*.<sup>65</sup>

In its function as cinematic close-up, Cattelan's sculpture *Him*, technically not a photograph, does three things to the relationship between photography and cinema and to the complementary relationship between the exhibition space and the outside world. First, incredibly, this excessively realistic sculpture is more photographic than all the thousands of photographs in the gallery just left behind: it is more precise, more readable, because larger in scale.

Second, at the same time, the object of the photo-realistic representation is shocking enough to stop us in our tracks. Here, physical and psychic stopping coincide, aggrandising each other's effect. Finally, the eyes can be looked into, but they don't look back. Hitler's glassy eyes are mercifully out of reach. Instead, his large eyes – looking, but not at us – must be looking into a mirror; the mirror of history that we have just left. To allude

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<sup>65</sup> Susan Buck-Morss (1994) points to the fear of early cinema spectators when confronted with close-ups. Sometimes they clamoured to see evidence that the figure whose head was the only visible part of the body had not been beheaded.



fig. 19, 20 Ydessa Hendeles, *The Teddy Bear Project*, in the exhibition *Partners*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2002.



to another show on a related theme, this sculpture can be said to be ‘mirroring evil’.<sup>66</sup> Since close-ups are cinematic images that counter the linearity of time, the deployment of this form here to present a figure who, historically, orchestrated the greatest catastrophe ever, is a way of protesting against a certain conception of nation, history, causality and time that a casual use of the narrative metaphor might unwittingly promote. Exhibited as it is after *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)*, this sculpture militates against the historical conception that construes time as inevitably linear, unstoppable, and simultaneously relegates the past to a distance. Producing a close-up of Hitler is a way of bringing him, and everything he stands for, *into the present tense*. This aspect might easily be overlooked.

It is from the retrospective vantage point of the present tense that the temporality of the thousands of photographs in *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)* receives its multi-layered density, a density that is, I contend, the aesthetic point of this ‘affective syntax’. We look back, and the cosiness becomes impenetrable. I personally had to go back, physically, thus becoming aware of the way this exhibition *counters* narrative linearity, while at the same time remaining a multilayered narrative.

At an earlier moment already, the sheer number of photographs had the same uncanny effect that mass graves can have. Their tense is the past, rigorously, so that we don’t know if the people in them are still alive. But now, ‘after’ Hitler, I want to know if and when they died; how many of them survived the dead man in the next room. Now, I see them through the face that overlays them. Cinema has a technique for this. Hitler’s face is edited in, like a *dissolve*. The superimposition of two images, one singular, one massively multiple, is a dissolve that creates memory space.

#### 8) *Axhibitions can benefit from moves that compel turning backward*

I tend to see in this backward movement – in the flashback constructed by the contrast between *Him* and *The Teddy Bear Project*, which all but imposes a return to the latter through *Him* – a quotation as critical commentary on such political visions of narrative as linear. This quotation compels us to do two things that cinema has taught us to be possible, albeit difficult. First, it makes us reflect from within – from within the formerly cosy galleries and within the composite image produced by the dissolve and now inevitably surrounding us – on a tension inherent in *The Teddy Bear Project*. This is the tension between safety, comfort, and childhood innocence, on the one hand, and the dangers of conformism, its bond with commerce, on the other, as well as the serious, formative potential of play, fantasy, and fiction. The phantom of ‘the nation’ is inherent in those dangers.

Second, this tension is compounded with the tension on which this work thrives – between the value of each singular person, a value embodied in the sometimes elaborate stories that accompany the pictures in the display cases, and the absorption of each person in multitudes, the multitude of Hitler’s soldiers, of those who went along with his soothing discourse for so long, for too long, until it was too late and the Hobbesian social body was formed, so that the multitude of victims could arise. And through the

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<sup>66</sup> I am referring to the exhibition *Mirroring Evil* held at the New York Jewish Museum, curated by Norman Kleeblatt. It is no coincidence that Cattelan’s sculpture diminishes the figure of Hitler to the size of a pre-adolescent boy, thus bringing it close to the toys that were so prominent in Kleeblatt’s exhibition. See Van Alphen (2001) for a critical study of the use of toys in relation to historical trauma.



transitional object of the teddy bear, the question of emotional complicity peeps in from around the corner.

But since this dissolve specifically involves a close-up and a long shot, it produces a memory space that binds both the past to the present, and this exhibition-visit to tragedy. For each of us visitors, that past tense has different connotations, inflections, but the affect of it cannot be held at bay. And for each of us, the memories which that affect yields are composite – not our own, but translated through innumerable stories and images. They are, as film theorist Kaja Silverman has argued, *heteropathic* memories, that is, the memories of others, felt in a strong affect-image.<sup>67</sup>

### 9) *Affect images can reposition the objects in the present tense*

This is the moment to spell out what the concept of *affect* is doing here; why it is so central, both to the very possibility of world memory and to the deployment of the cinematic in exhibition practices. Through the etymological sense of aesthetics as binding through the senses, *affect* connects the aesthetic quality of this exhibition and the art it includes, to what I like to see as a new, totally contemporary politics of looking. To understand affect without resorting to psychology, our best resource is Deleuze's first book on cinema. There, he exposes Bergson's vision of perception, a vision Deleuze puts to work in his theory of cinema. Perception, in the Bergsonian/Deleuzian sense, is a selection of what, from the universe of visibility, is 'usable' in our lives. This is, incidentally, also the point of a non-prescriptive itinerary.<sup>68</sup>

Perception makes visible the usable 'face' of things. This is why perception is bound up with framing: cinema as well as exhibitions makes such a selection for us, proposing a particular perception. Such a selective perception prepares the possibility for action. 'Action-images', as Deleuze calls them, show us how to act upon what we perceive. Deleuze uses the verb '*incurver*': to 'incurve' the visible universe is to measure a virtual relationship of action, between us and the things we see. Mutuality is key here: images can act upon us as much as we can act upon them. As I mentioned earlier, between a perception that troubles us and an action we hesitate about, *affect* emerges. Affect-images present a temporarily congealed, intensified relationship between perception and the action-ready agency that coincides with subjectivity. In other words, the viewer sees (what is within the frame), and hesitates about what to do; she is thus trapped in affect.

'Art preserves,' wrote Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in *What is Philosophy?* (1994). Hendeles' exhibition demonstrates what it is that art preserves and how it accomplishes this. Deleuze and Guattari describe the objects of preservation as blocks of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects. These blocks exist independent of the subjects experiencing them. They exist as blocs of sensations, percepts, and affects, and as syntax: a syntax that 'ascends irresistibly into his [the writer's] work and passes into sensation'. But even if they endure, they do not, themselves, have a memory.<sup>69</sup>

To understand the contribution to this cinematic exhibition of photographs as art-

67 Agnès Varda's documentary film about the *Teddy Bear Project* shows some visitors' responses that, in all their variety, confirm the affective investment in other people's past the photo exhibit impels (2003).

68 Bergson (1997[1896]: p. 29). See also Bergson (1998[1907]).

69 Silverman (1996: pp. 163-4, emphasis in text p. 167).

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fig. 21 Maurizio Cattelan, *Him* (2001), seen from the back, installed in the exhibition *Partners*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2002.

works and of objects that, in the wake of photography, take on its primary characteristics, the relationship of complementary contrast between photography and memory is key. Kaja Silverman formulated this relationship in the following words:

‘Whereas photography performs its memorial function by lifting an object out of time and immortalising it for ever in a particular form, memory is all about temporality and change.’ (p. 157)

I want to close with a short description of an exhibition project that uses narrative in the choice of works, and at the same time tries to let go of it in the concept of the exhibition. This is *Doble Movimiento: Estéticas Migratorias*, which I am co-curating with Miguel Angel Hernández Navarro in Murcia, and is travelling internationally under the title 2MOVE. Like the cinematic cut from *The Teddy Bear Project* to *Him*, we install twenty-eight video works as cases of a zoom-in to a close-up, as the flashback that ensues once the close-up has stalled linear time, and the resulting dissolve, all constitute a particular instance of a montage that stitches together photography and memory. As a result – and this is, here, what ‘art preserves’ – the visitor is able to let the installation ‘introduce the “not me” into memory reserve’ (Silverman, p. 185). This is especially relevant with the theme of this exhibition, which is emphatically *not* migratory experience as such, but the traces or ghosts of that experience within that of the cultures of arrival.<sup>70</sup>

Hence the memories this exhibition attempts to produce through its many cinematic devices are not inherent in the art objects themselves, although, as video works, it might appear so. The syntax producing them is there thanks to the installation, which juxtaposes works to form a sequence, readable by means of the rhetorical figures mentioned earlier, so as to create narratives. For example, Gary Ward’s *8till8*, a self-reflective piece, is installed with his *Kofi Cleaning*, a descriptive, but also reflective piece. Together this combination works like a dissolve of self and other, problematising that distinction. This is the artist’s installation, or montage, now titled *Inflection*. But exiting the semi-separate space where these two pieces are installed, one hits Daniel Lupión’s *Entrevistándome con Emigrantes*, a different kind of reflection on, and undermining of, the self-other distinction. Here, the artist has simply reversed roles, and is interviewed by migrants instead of interviewing them. The juxtaposition with Ward’s works produces a double dissolve, and it is the memory of that experience that is key to the exhibition.

But the heteropathic memories that contribute to creating an affective discourse in the present tense – those memories are virtual, not actual, so long as visitors do not ‘perform’ the ‘film’. Once they do, however, induced by this montage, world memory becomes activated and can become actual – in the present tense, which is not inherent in the image but is one of its potential modes. This process is what makes this exhibition, as much as *Partners*, acutely contemporary.

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70 2MOVE: *Migratory Aesthetics* was first held in Murcia, Spain, in Sala Veronicas and Centro Párraga, 4-2 to 11-5 2007, then in Enkhuizen, Netherlands, Zuiderzeemuseum, 19-9-2007 to 3-2-2008; from 273 to 10-5 2008 in the Stenersen Museet in Oslo, and on to Ireland.



fig. 22, 23 Maurizio Cattelan, *Him* (2001), frontal view, in the exhibition *Partners*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2002.

23





fig. 24 Gary Ward, *Inflection* (Still8).

fig. 25 Gary Ward, *Inflection* (Kofi Cleaning).

fig. 26 Daniel Lupión, *Entrevistándome con inmigrantes*, 2002.

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## WASTED, LOST IN THE WORKS

### BEATRIZ HERRÁEZ

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To speak about exhibition practices, about exhibitions – what they are, how they work, how they are built, what they show, but also what they hide – is surely, and paradoxically, something rather unusual in our activity as critics, historians, or artists. For the past few years we have been having endless debates about a possible ‘alternative’ to the form of the exhibition, a constant and continued act of forgetting, rethinking, reframing exhibitions, which materialised in more or less fortunate proposals and in diverse texts and publications, but above all, in the activation of certain exhibition protocols that tend towards a ‘dissolution’ of it as a curatorial ‘strategy’.

However, whenever curators, artists, critics and theorists of very different origins and trajectories reopen the conversation about this possible disappearance of the exhibition, the most immediate answer is the need to define the exhibition – prior to any dissolution of or alternative to it.

This was the first idea sketched in the introduction to a research project I ran two years ago, titled precisely *Alternativas a la exposición (Alternatives to the Exhibition)*, initiated at the Centro de Arte Santa Mónica in Barcelona, as an attempt to make possible different means of collaboration with professionals in the field. A process that finally derived into a redefinition of the initial project – after the encounters/sessions that took place – and which, in the end, could be retitled as something like ‘The Exhibition as an Alternative to the Exhibition’. Because even if it is true that the exhibition is no longer the exclusive, nor at times the most important, activity in museums and contemporary art centres – and the research supported by the Santa Mónica art centre is a direct consequence of this redefinition of the institution’s capacity – it is a fact that the exhibition format continues to be the fundamental axis for museum programmes and projects.

*What history is to be told? – How are narratives constructed?*

On many occasions, there have been ironical comments about not only the health of the museum as stated by Broodthaers in the title of this seminar, but also about the possible death of the exhibition, its loss of meaning and necessary redefinition. Among this sort of collection of ‘epitaphs’, one of the ideas that appeared repeatedly in the project of ‘alternatives to exhibition’ could be summed up in the union between two lapidary phrases about this practice: ‘We play with dead things, with the thoughts of others and in a space that doesn’t even belong to us.’ This is the sum of the statements of an artist, Mike Kelley, and a curator, Bob Nickas. Not very encouraging.

To go on playing with the references we are immersed in, starting with the statement by Broodthaers, another accurate – and also funereal – description of the exhibition could be excerpted from the novel *Locus Solus* written by Raymond Roussel in 1914. Its main character, Martial Canterel, dreams up a substance called ‘resurrectina’ that is injected in selected dead bodies to enable them to mechanically repeat, before their loved ones and from inside glass urns, some of the most memorable moments of their lives, their experiences. These repetition machines are the main characters of a ‘flat and discontinuous universe in which each thing refers only to itself’, a definition of Roussel’s literary production that could also be applied to certain exhibition protocols. The prodigious ‘resurec-

tina' provokes a powerful electric current and unchains a curious awakening of memory, enabling the rigorously precise reproduction by the injected body of the key moments of its past existence reconstructed inside a glass jar; an illusion of real life, that even in the conditions described above, and in each setting, was a different narration for an identical viewer, a dialogue of repetition and nostalgia. Again, not very encouraging either.

It is far from my intention to defend any theory in which the curator's work is to be identified with or even compared to that of some celestial being who brings works back to life. On the contrary, in Deleuze's phrase as already used by Mieke Bal in his speech: 'It is those blocks of precepts and affects, of present sensations, that owe their conservation to themselves and grant to the event the compound that commemorates it.' However, in the case of too many recent exhibitions, the curator-narrator, and the museum, are too frequently mistaken for supposed revivers who intervene in works and authors – even those who stated in their wills the wish not to be revived. I would prefer to talk about 'resurrectina' from the point of view of its exclusively electrical nature and its use as a means of energy and enlightenment. Its application in exhibitions where the viewers respond in a less static way in front of the exhibited element, because this element of artificiality happens only rarely, in response to an agreed setting where the trick is visible, exposed and at the same time carefully respected by all those taking part in it; a tacit agreement between curator, object and spectator, which implies a deliberate suspension of disbelief in which what is displayed is re-activated. This is the more experimental exhibition that Mieke previously highlighted, an exhibition that is a sequence of unforeseen elements, of tales and counter-tales, of 'conversations' in a concrete time and space, adequately lit up – or shadowed, depending on the occasion. This is possibly the best and worst part of our job – the tensions and frictions that arise between what is exhibited and what is hidden, between those more or less productive 'encounters' and those agreements, or more or less unexpected disagreements', that happen in the exhibition. It is the identification and reactivation, when necessary, of the discrepancy zones, the non-coincidence and ambiguity, a territory that is too frequently neutralised by voices that do not permit, but forbid and oppose, the danger of a space without definition, of inadequacy, of trial and error. Then we should point out the necessity of these suspension and exchange zones in which narrations, tales and dialogues are generated, lit up until they blind us, or as a 'dark room', available to be used for occasional meetings; even taking the risk of failure, of 'being wasted ... in the work', as was announced by Benjamin's *Angelus Novus* in 1922. Because in the urgency of the frantic rhythm currently imposed on our practice, everything appears to be subject to an immediate reaction, and at times it is difficult – though not impossible – to find proposals that do not limit themselves to mere answers or diagnosis, transforming that 'double condition of the exhibition' as an argument and performativity into a brief commentary on the present and a more or less original grimace or frown. As an example, a text by French artist Franck Scurti recently stated: 'I have noticed that there are many artists who, well, if there is no exhibition, there is no work! The logic of the response conditions the production of the work... There is a sort of protocol; they invite you to an exhibition, then they talk about the means of production, then you know how much money is involved and finally you make an offer depending on the total sum! Frequently there is even a theme for this type of exhibition, then one ends up responding to the subject.' Something applicable to a greater or lesser extent to the responsibility of all the actors of the exhibition; the situation described by Franck Scurti provokes a confusion derived from the vertiginous rhythm of an exhibition where the

artist, the curator and also the viewer come to take the presuppositions of an exhibition – of its production – for concepts. And this has as a necessary consequence the impossibility of building those zones of inadequacy I alluded to before, or the existence of a nearly forgotten practice, that of finding proposals that are not limited to mere answers to questions formulated by others. And that is something that is dangerously normalised.

A possible reaction against this situation is the inclusion – the recovery – of an alternative time, a certain delay in the exhibition experience, and above all, to prepare opportunities where these synchronised dialogues – not imposed from other spheres – between the actors of the exhibition could take place. And in the context where we find ourselves, dealing with the health of the museum and the institution, another question would be; how, when and where are these conditions granted? Or better yet, going a little further on, how to generate them, make them possible, provoke them if necessary, from the museum, the art centre or the institution? That would truly be its undead space.

## SHIPWRECK AND WORKERS

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ALLAN SEKULA

The cops are collecting their orange nets, looking to snare another group of unruly protesters like sardines. The Republican lady delegate standing outside Madison Square Garden, scouting out a safe place for lunch, announces with no little impatience that the president is a 'hard worker'. What this means exactly I try to guess. It is said as if she were his boss. Maybe he's not so bright, but he makes up for it with energy and zeal. A cheerful leader. A cheerleader. There's a job to be done, and he does it, and he gets everyone else to go along.

Imagine a monument to imperial labour for the 21st century: a cheerleader's megaphone and empty work boots, waiting for the next candidate in a business suit, ready to mingle, press the flesh, and share roasted fowl with the 'boots on the ground', a euphemism for those who do the dirty work, day in and day out. For a moment, their tasks are rescued from absurdity and violence by folksy but condescending populism. By the mid-1920s, photomontage sounded the death knell of political monuments, at least in countries with a free press. Every monument and every politician aspiring to become a monument could be sentenced to death by a few judicious paper cuts. No ceremony performed for the camera was safe from mockery.

Before the political cartoon entered the age of mechanical reproduction, monuments were still fundamentally intact. Monuments could answer and speak to other monuments: they were not yet mere vertical relics of exhausted bloodlines. A philosophical democrat from the artisan class could even imagine monuments that would implicitly answer the hauteur of the powerful, not with mockery, but with the dignity, gravity and energy of the labouring classes. This was the case with Constantin Meunier.

It is all the more remarkable that Meunier did this at the same time as industrial engineers were trying to rework the labouring body into an ever more efficient mechanism. He counters their pragmatic realism with an empiricism of his own.

With *The Puddler* (1884) Meunier responds both to the Cartesianism of Rodin's *The Thinker* (1880) and to the piety of Millet's *Angelus* (1857-1859). The seated ironworker is thinking, not praying. The disposition of his left arm provides a clue. Without looking, mouth agape in the heat from the smelting furnace; he lets the lactic acid of fatigue drain from his shoulder and elbow joint. *This is what I must do, in my repose, to recover and face the fire again.* Just as both rider and horse know that the horse must drink to remain in motion.

It is surprising that one of the first sophisticated political photomontages, dating from 1909, took not King Leopold (a worthy target if there ever was one, especially in the last year of his life) but Meunier's *The Puddler* as its subject.

The radical American lawyer, Crystal Eastman, painstakingly documents the miserly compensation doled out to the maimed railroad, steel-mill, and other industrial workers of Pittsburgh(1)<sup>71</sup>. Her transformed *The Puddler* is both St Sebastian and a butcher's sectioned side of beef. The illustration reaches back to the Renaissance sources of social realism while pointing the way to the montages of John Heartfield and the statistical pictograms of the 1920s. For her bitter irony to strike home, and to maintain its distance from individual cases, her orange bookkeeper's overlay requires the sombre typicality of an already represented, elegiac figure.

Thus in practice she takes a middle stance in an ongoing debate about the relative value of images and statistics. Her fellow socialist, the German writer Kurt Tucholsky, who later collaborated with Heartfield, called passionately for 'more photographs', and even claimed that 'photographs of mutilated hands' are more convincing than 'statistics, reports...and provocative speeches'. Eastman took a different tack, believing that 'statistics are good stuff to start a revolution with'<sup>72</sup>.

Eastman's acerbic statistical overlay of Meunier's sculpture predates his first (posthumous) American exhibition, at the Albright Museum in Buffalo, New York, in 1913, patronised by the barons of American steel-making. Meunier enters America stage left in 1909, and exits stage right four years later, largely forgotten by a business civilisation that takes abstract pride in 'hard work'. I'm surprised at how infrequently contemporary artists recognise his name.

It would be far-fetched to say that *Shipwreck* (1890), another of Meunier's sculptures, was a premonition of his son's death at sea, or of his own position in the history of art. But would it be any less so to say his assembled workers remain today a premonition of what had already been imagined a century earlier, a universal republic? Or that the energy of this premonition still haunts the hand that becomes, through a feat of figurative abstraction, a wind vane or a fork?

[The debate which followed these participations was not recorded]

71 Crystal Eastman, *Work Accidents and the Law: Vol. 2 of The Pittsburgh Survey* (New York, Charities Publication Committee, 1910). Originally appeared in *Charities and the Commons*, Vol. 21, No. 23. (6 March 1909) The caption for the montage reads: 'Valuations put on men in Pittsburgh in 1907.' A table below gives the compensation details for 27 work accidents.

72 Kurt Tucholsky, "Mehr fotografien!" *Vorwärts*, 28 June 1912. Reprinted in *Gesamtausgabe: Texte und Briefe Kurt Tucholsky*, ed. Antje Bonitz [et al.] (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1996) Vol. 1, pp. 67-68. Crystal Eastman, "The Three Essentials for Accident Prevention," *American Academy of Political and Social Science Annals*, July-December 1911. Reprinted in Blanche Wiesen Cook, ed. *Crystal Eastman on Women and Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 280-290.

THE SUBALTERNATE VOICE: LATIN AMERICA  
MAIN SPEAKER: JOHN BEVERLEY  
OTHER PARTICIPANTS: GUSTAVO BUNTINX,  
PAULO HERKENHOFF, ANA LONGONI  
MODERATOR: TERESA VELÁZQUEZ

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**Teresa Velázquez** This afternoon's session broaches the relationship between art and subalternity from different perspectives. In 1995 artist Guillermo Gómez Peña declared in an open letter addressed to the artistic community: 'A multi-cultural fever with an epidemic dimension has spread throughout the world of art.' In a decade the multi-cultural paradigm has become generalised as an institutional panacea to manage difference, and we are facing a categorisation of so-called cultural diversity that not only threatens neutralising its political drive, but lends legitimacy to aesthetic cosmopolitanism, which makes the concept of alternativeness banal in itself. The persistence of a disadvantageous relationship that is subordinate in Latin American art with regards to the international artistic circuit makes obvious that there still exist hubs of symbolic power and artistic legitimisation in the new order backed by globalisation. The pertinence of a subalternative voice essentially fulfils a function as resistance that necessarily operates against dominant cultural values.

SUBALTERNITY AS INTERRUPTION  
(CACHE AND KUBA)  
JOHN BEVERLEY

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First of all, I would like to express a certain insecurity in intervening in the world of art and museums. My world belongs to literary criticism and university circles. Perhaps this insistence is redundant but it helps me to present, experientially if you like, my subject, which is the relationship between art and subalternity. Someone defined as subaltern is, in the first instance, a subject who feels insecure, unauthorised. Insecurity is thus double, because today I want to talk about the boundaries in the realm of art, its radical insufficiency which reveals itself precisely in its efforts to incorporate or represent that which is subaltern, among these, the project of associating the museum of modern art with social movements.

The subject of interruption is fashionable today in philosophy and art. This is not exactly a new subject. As is known, it has its origins in the distinction established by Kantian aesthetics between theological and aesthetic judgment and the re-functionalisation of this distinction carried out by Russian formalists of the 20th century when they adopted the notion of aesthetic action as *ostranenie* or defamiliarisation. From here it moved to, for example, the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* or the 'convulsive beauty' of surrealist artists and later on to the heterogeneous strategies we understand

today as contemporary art.

This is widely known. But, what is it that interrupts the self-satisfied celebration of interruption? This is a question that pertains to the relationship between art and modernity. As is known, modernity involves the ideal, and at the same time, the material possibility of a transparent society in itself – the generalisation of the principle of communicative reasoning, to evoke the concept stated by Habermas. Therefore, the logic of modernisation is essentially aculturating or transculturating. The social function granted to modern or avant-garde art was – is – to serve as a material instrument and (in the specific case of a museum, as ideological apparatus of the state), a ruling allegory of this process of transculturalisation/aculturalisation. Yet what opposes the possibility of a transparent society in itself is not only the conflict of modernity/tradition but rather the proliferation of differences and heterogeneities produced precisely by the combined and unequal development of modernity. In this sense, the concept of subalternity does not allude to a pre-modern identity but precisely a relationship of differential integration that is also subordinate within contemporaneity. Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty formulates the problem in the following way:

‘Strictly speaking, the stories of how this or that group in Asia, Africa or Latin America resisted the penetration of capitalism are not ‘subaltern’ because these narrations are based on the imagination of a space which is external to capital – a ‘before’ chronological capital, but at the same time, a part of a unitarian historicist time framework, within which both the ‘before’ and ‘after’ of the capitalistic production way can develop. The ‘outside’ [of what is subaltern] is different from what is imagined as simply ‘before and after capital’ in historicist prose. I believe that this ‘outside’, as stated by Derrida, is something connected to the same category of capital, something that shapes the time code in which capital appears and at the same time violates this code; something that it is possible to perceive just because we can think/theorise capital, but is something that also reminds us that there are also other temporalities, other ways of worlding... resistance against which they allude to that can only happen within the time horizon of capital and yet have to be thought of as something that interrupts the unity of this time span.’

The concept of ungovernability expresses the incommensurability between what Chakrabarty calls the ‘radical heterogeneity’ of subalternity and the *raison d’être* of the modern state. Ungovernability is the space of negativity, disobedience, resentment, transgression or insurgency within globalisation. But as such, ungovernability marks the failure of politics (in the sense of political parties, formal democracy, rule, social society, public circles, etc.). As is known, for Gramsci, the party is necessary – the ‘Modern Prince’ – to enable subaltern classes or groups access to power, because as such – in other words, as subalterns – they lack the capacity of what Gramsci called ‘conscious leadership’ indispensable for the task of revolutionising socio-cultural relationships that constitute them as subalterns in the first place. But if to obtain the rule of the state, the ideological apparatus and culture, subalternity needs to be transformed essentially into what is currently hegemonic – in other words, modern bourgeois culture – then in a certain sense, the ruling class will continue prevailing, even if politically conquered. This paradox defines the crisis of the Communist project of the 20th century (and marks an impasse in the thinking of Gramsci himself). From this perspective, hegemony as such could be seen to be a sort of screen in which dominant classes and groups – and among these, the group of intellectuals and the world

of art – project their fear of being displaced from their power and relative privilege by a multi-faceted subordinate subject that is always incompletely represented by and in their cultural practices.

The equation between civilian society, learned culture, aesthetic modernism and hegemony in Gramsci and other thinkers of modernity hide the fact that subalternity necessarily gears itself against what dominant groups understand to be culture and cultural values, including the world of art. This is the great theme of cultural studies. But the project of cultural studies does not break away in itself from the values of modernity. Indeed, the process of de-territorialisation and cultural hybridism that celebrates, reproduces – but at a level of popular cultures or mass cultures and in a register that is post- or para-national – modern teleology expressed previously in the idea of defamiliarisation and trans-culturalisation.

Here we are not idealising the pre-capitalistic tradition or *Gemeinschaft*. This would make the subalternist point of view, in fact, another form of elite thinking, a sort of postmodern customisation. It is more like finding ways of transferring the constitutive negativity of subalternity to the strata of the dominant culture, including practices of contemporary art. Subalternity has no more reasons to celebrate tradition than modernity has, as both dimensions can – and they usually do – supply the conditions of their subordination and deprivation of identity; brand a subject that is not totalisable as ‘the people’ in the homogenising sense that this has had in nationalistic discourse, or like the ‘citizen’ of Habermas.

The crisis of Communism has been explained in terms of opposition of a state-party that is coercive and monolithic and the supposed heterogeneity of civilian society. Yet subalternity is also not commensurable with what is normally understood as civilian society: in other words Hegel’s *burgerlich Gessellschaft* and the Enlightenment. This is because both the idea and the historic building of civilian society share with the modern state a historicist narration of stages of development which, because of its cultural and legal requirements (urbanisation, literacy, formal education, means of communication, nuclear family, private property, aesthetic avant-gardeness, etc.), excludes citizens or limits access to wide swathes of the population. This exclusion or limitation that operates within civilian society and the world of culture is also part of subalternity. In other words, the inequalities of class, genre, ethnic origin, occupation, also run through and are produced and/or reproduced within civilian society. Therefore, the opposition of civilian society/state is not equal to the opposition between subalternity/domination. Secularity as a value and the forms of a secular culture properly speaking (science, literature and modern art, history and social sciences, language of civilian rights, etc.) are, as the ideals of democracy and social equality, products of modernity and are, up to a certain point, intertwined with these ideals. Yet the object of an egalitarian society should not be secularisation in itself (a goal that is impossible to achieve anyway), or the dominance of science or the ‘experts’ (which, in present-day conditions would be equivalent to the dominance of the great multinationals that have monopolised or are in the process of monopolising technology and computing). However, the call to subalternity also cannot celebrate the forms of inequality of traditional societies or religions, simply because they are non-modern or anti-modern. A neo-traditionalism or religious fundamentalism can be highly compatible with a modern autocratic order (as in the case of Franco’s Spain, or Chile under the dictatorship of Pinochet or the neo-Confucianism of Singapore and the Asian capitalistic regimes). Also – we repeat – it



is not an insistence on identity as such, as in a process of hegemonic articulation, the class identities or social groups involved are necessarily transformed to the same degree as the structural relationships that determine those identities, which are the first modified, change. The radical possibility of the subalternist perspective thus resides strictly in a constitutive insistence, not on difference, but on social equality.

I will attempt to present two allegories on the pertinence of this problem in artistic practices, especially in those practices that seek to represent subalternity. The first is an installation by Turkish artist Kutlug Ataman for the Carnegie International Exposition in 2004 in Pittsburg. It was called *Kuba*, a title that alludes to a marginalised suburb – a sort of favela – in the city of Istanbul. It seems that at another moment in time this was a bohemian district that has been transformed today into a district of residence for criminals, drug addicts, prostitutes, petty criminals, street children, single mothers, Islamic fundamentalists, Kurdish refugees, peasants who have just arrived in the city, beggars: in other words, the urban subordinates. The installation consists of 40 video posts, each with a television set on a table, a video player and a chair where the viewer can sit to see the screen. In each screen, in an endless loop, a character of the district is presented, telling episodes from his or her life. As in the case of literary testimony, the viewer must assume that the stories are true, but sometimes they also involve elements of invention or fantasy. Each narration lasts fifteen minutes, more or less, so to view them all would take over half a day. Thus one chooses, but with a slightly uncomfortable conscience for having chosen one instead of another. The television sets and the chairs are second-hand, as if bought in a flea market. They are also products discarded by modernity in a similar way to the characters whose stories are represented on the television screens.

The Carnegie International catalogue presents the installation as a sort of celebration of individualism within a community matrix: 'The result is a compelling portrait of a self-constructed society composed of individual identities yet grounded in a web of community values that embrace nearly unlimited personal freedom and mutual tolerance.' I believe that this characterisation is too assertive and betrays complicity between expositions such as the Carnegie one and globalisation, as well as neo-liberal themes of the end of the story. In this sense, it would be more of a 'customs' representation or a 'roguish' one, which latter instance shapes the (relatively privileged) position of the viewer. Rather, I believe that the intention of the artist was to suggest the installation as a challenge for the viewer, the challenge of some lives that we would otherwise be totally unaware of, but now, due to the fact that they form part of an exhibition in a museum, force us to pay attention to them. But in another sense, the triumphant attitude of the catalogue is justified because the installation also manages to contain the radical ungovernability of that which is subaltern-urban and produced in the margins of globalisation (the neighborhood is a social space that is not articulated by either the state or capitalism, strictly speaking) within the space of contemporary art and the museum. It produces what Gayatri Spivak has called a 'domesticated other'. Even the small ethical crisis of not being able to pay attention to all the stories works as an 'aesthetic' experience. Or to put it another way, the effect of *ostranenie* or defamiliarisation takes place precisely because of the ethical problem provoked in the viewer by the artefact. And, what could be more desirable for this viewer, the post-modern, globalised *flâneur*, than this access to a subaltern subject that hands us along with the surcharge that makes our lifestyle possible, something that we desire even

more: his or her 'truth'? This inherent paradox of the Ataman installation reminds us of the criticism made by Walter Benjamin of the so-called New Objectivism in German photography in his essay 'The Author as Producer'. Benjamin observes that, in its aesthetic-formal precision, this photography not only 'makes poverty a consumer object', but indeed has 'made the battle against poverty a consumer object', thus transforming 'political battles into a compulsion to decide on an object as contemplative rejoicing'. How to avoid, then, the transformation of the representation of subalternity into a form of perception and participation through art that leaves the current relations of dominance and subordination intact or even reinforced?

The second allegory comes from this question. This is the new film, *Caché* (Hidden), by Austrian director Michael Haneke. This is a complex film, and due to time reasons, I will present a too-abbreviated version of it (in particular, I cannot take into consideration the figure of the mother as she deserves). It starts with a fixed and prosaic shot of the façade of a modest yet obviously comfortable and well-appointed home in Paris. Due to its uninterrupted duration, the image becomes enigmatic and disquieting. We discover that what we are seeing is in fact a video, and that we are watching it with the owners of the house, a middle-class professional couple, on their television. We see an interior that presents the couple as representatives of the world of art and culture. Books, CDs, pictures, cover the walls. The husband is called Georges, the host of a television programme about literature in which he interviews authors and critics; she works for a publishing company. They have only one son, Pierrot, somewhat alienated from them in a typically teenage way. Days go by and other videos follow, now accompanied by drawings in a crude style, like children's drawings, representing a severed head, or a chicken with a severed head marked by red ink. In one of the videos Georges recognises the cottage where his mother, who is a widow, still lives and where he spent his youth. It is a large rural middle-class house. Another video includes a take from a car driving along the streets of an unidentified suburb of Paris that was previously the 'Red Belt' but today houses mostly Arab and African immigrants. We also see the façade, a corridor and the door of an apartment in an apartment block of that district. Georges manages to decipher, by the street signs in the take – Lenin Avenue, for example – the identity of the suburb and the address of the apartment. Bothered by the inexplicable aggression of the videos, he decides to investigate. He goes to the place, reaches the door represented in the video image, and knocks on it. A man his own age opens it. It is, we discover along with Georges, someone he lived with during the time of the cottage, in their youth, but who by chance has ended up in this poor suburb. His name is Majid: he is Algerian. We understand from the conversation he has with Georges that his life has been mediocre, frustrated. Georges accuses him of being the author of the videos but Majid denies this. Georges threatens him, and leaves. He returns to his house. A few days later another video arrives, this time showing Majid sitting in his apartment crying disconsolately after Georges' departure, as if this entire scene had been filmed by someone hiding inside the apartment during the visit. Georges gradually remembers the story behind his reunion with Majid at the apartment. Majid's parents, who were servants of Georges' parents, had died in a massacre perpetrated by the French police against Algerian demonstrators protesting against the Algerian war in 1962 (a specific historic fact). In view of this catastrophe, Georges' parents decided to adopt Majid. But Georges resents the presence on equal terms of the Algerian boy, and does all he can to sabotage his welcome by his own

parents. One day he tells him, lying, that the father has ordered him to cut the head off a chicken. Majid does this, but is left bloodied by the deed. It is not very clear what happens later, but we understand that somehow or other Georges denounces his companion to his parents, perhaps suggesting that Majid had physically threatened him with the knife he used to kill the chicken. In the end the family expels Majid from the house and take him by force to an orphanage. Georges does not see nor hear of him again until he finally meets up with him in the apartment.

A few days later, Georges receives a call from Majid, asking him to please come and visit him at the apartment as he has something to confess to him. Georges goes, but shortly after he enters the apartment, Majid pulls out a knife and cuts his own throat, committing suicide in front of the visitor. The blood that spurts from his neck stains the wall, just like in the drawings that accompanied the videos. A few days later, Majid's son, a young man, arrives at the offices of the television channel where Georges works and insists on talking to Georges, blaming him for the suicide of his father.

After a tense confrontation between them in the presence of his colleagues, Georges manages to get rid of the young man. Feeling exhausted after the encounter, he decides to go home. He draws the curtains, takes a sleeping pill, sleeps, and we see on the film screen what he is dreaming, a sort of inner video. It is the moment when Majid is expelled from the family home, seen from a distance, with a fixed viewpoint. We see Majid tamely leaving the house with his adoptive parents next to him, but afterwards he cries out in protest, 'No, no, I don't want to leave!' and manages to escape. The employees of the orphanage who have come to pick him up capture him and force him into a car. The parents go back into the house, abandoning the son they had by chance adopted. The car drives off out of shot with Majid inside it. The last thing we see is a group of chickens crossing the yard of the house, scared by the noise of the car.

Another long take starts, like the one of the façade at the beginning of the film. This one shows the entrance of the school which the couple's son Pierrot attends. On one side of the scene we see Pierrot meeting Majid's son; they talk and leave, apparently together. The encounter is fleeting and enigmatic. The question arises: could Pierrot have been the author of the videos, an accomplice in that way of Majid's son? The film does not give the relief of an answer. The titles begin to appear on the scene in front of the school, and that is the end of the film.

The fact of being viewers of the film and being thus involved in its enigma places us in the same experiential situation as Georges and his wife when seeing the videos. Some will, vaguely sinister and hostile, be questioning our condition of being liberal middle-class, *bien pensant* citizens. The use of surveillance video – like in shopping malls or transit places – for protection against theft and disorder is inverted here. I don't know if Haneke's reference is intentional, but it leads us to remember films of the inhabitants of the Casbah in Algiers made by the French army to identify the members of the FLN in the film *The Battle of Algiers*. It also reminds us that many of the institutions of today that Haneke's film alludes to – surveillance cameras, systematic torture and arbitrary detention on suspicion of terrorism, the permanent state of emergency, the act of terrorist suicide, the de facto apartheid of immigrants in large European cities – have their origins in the modern colonial wars and, above all, in the Algerian war. This makes the film *The Battle of Algiers*, produced forty years ago, absolutely contemporary: it is said it was screened in military training schools and to US civil officials to inculcate in them an idea of what they would find in Iraq.

In *Caché*, the surveillance video operates like a bad conscience of the dominant classes and countries in a post-colonial world in which the violent inequalities of the colonial system still exist in new ways. Silently and implacably, from the position of subalternity – from ‘the poor of the Earth’ – the image of what we are and what we believe returns to the viewer – to us – alongside our own complicity with injustice. But precisely this injustice – hidden, forgotten, and denied – is what constitutes the very possibility of the world of art and culture, a world represented in part *in*, and in part *by*, the film. The moral of this allegory (since any allegory has a moral) is not simply to counterpoise subalternity versus art, as if art belonged to Western and bourgeois society while subalternity belongs in its radical negativity, was also the negation of art as such. In *Caché* there is an undoubted denial of the world of modern art and culture, but it is carried out via, in a certain way, a different artistic practice, from the point of view of subalternity. I mean the videos and the primitive, violent drawings that accompany them, executed by someone whose identity we do not exactly know, but someone who is watching us constantly, always from a point of view of resentment and humiliation that he or she wishes to impose on us. And, as seen in the ‘inner video’ of Georges’ dream, this practice is, in a certain way, also inside the privileged Western subject, but literally, as his ‘political unconscious’, to borrow a concept from Fredric Jameson – in other words, like something we cannot remember in order to continue doing what we do in good faith.

This is once again, like the Ataman installation, a work of art, made precisely for the ‘liberal’ public that usually goes to art films; in other words, a public that is essentially equivalent to the family represented in the film. However, in *Caché* there is in the very act of creating an aesthetic artefact, a more radical questioning, in my opinion, of the operation and function of aesthetic elements in the world of today. In some way, the denial of subalternity has been incorporated into the very logic of the work. Perhaps for this reason, Haneke’s film work is commonly perceived as ‘nihilistic’ or ‘cruel’ (as opposed to, for example, Kieslowski or Almodóvar, who state that, as a last resort, there is a possibility of ‘happiness’ in post-modern Europe).

Both *Kuba* and *Caché* contain in their core the problem of the presence of a post-colonial Islamic population at the heart of modern European culture – a population that has not been integrated or suitably represented in that culture, but nonetheless is here and whose presence has specific effects: among others, terrorism. The calculated suicide of Majid in *Caché* perhaps alludes to the fact that probably the best-known narrative form in Islamic cultures today is videocassettes of suicide terrorists, of the martyr. Would terrorism not be, then, a sort of aesthetic practice from the point of view of subalternity? We know this idea was stated by German composer Stockhausen several years ago, when he described the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Twin Towers of New York as a sublime aesthetic show – a statement he quickly withdrew after the general scandal it caused. In view of the great wave of destruction and hatred that appeared in fringe suburbs of Paris and other French cities, *Caché* and its debut prior to that violence, revealed itself in one way to be a profoundly prophetic work of art. Yet the limitations or aporias of terrorism and spontaneous violence – its tendency to precisely reinforce the ‘state of security’ it supposedly challenges – are well known. In the end, according to Stockhausen’s suggestion, perhaps there is not such a great distance between the avant-garde *ostraneni* and terror: both are forms of a modernity that wishes to impose itself radically on populations. Thus, I believe that it would

be much more useful to articulate the dilemma of the relationship between art and subalternity from the angle of an instance of resistance or subaltern non-terrorist negation: I mean the violent and massive reaction in the Islamic world, in and outside Europe, against the cartoons in the European press that satirised the figure of Mohammed (a reaction that makes us remember a similar reaction, two decades ago, when Salman Rushdie's novel *Satanic Verses* was published). This reaction obviously could not be affirmed or backed from the point of view of a museum or the circle of artistic or literary production, precisely because the transgression represented by those images depends on artistic liberalism – the principle of freedom of creation and expression – which is part of the very ideology by which it justifies itself. In Europe and other places in the world, this principle of creative freedom was won the hard way over centuries of fighting against absolutism or modern dictatorships. Yet the great demonstrations against images, with their iconography of consecrated slogans, chants, flags or symbolic figures that are burned – reveal that this freedom has become an accomplice, in a way, of racism and dominance. What happens, then, if we consider these manifestations as a sort of non-terrorist aesthetic practice from a subaltern point of view? Among other things, we would have to contemplate in this case that in a city like Barcelona and a district such as El Raval, the object of these manifestations could well have been – it is possible – an institution that represents and defends the principle of free artistic expression, such as the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Could other forms of aesthetic practice be imagined from the point of view of subalternity? Another way, not as determinedly Manichean, in which subaltern practices and the state ideological apparatus or the dominant civilian society that we occupy, such as museums or schools, could be related? Would it be possible to produce a new form of art and a new form of politics, a sort of coalition between ourselves and the groups or subaltern cultures on behalf of whom 'we speak'? I think so, because as a last resort what we could share is a wish for a different mode of social existence, more open to democratic and egalitarian transformation, to multicultural differences. It is interesting to remember that in this sense *Caché* finishes with what is at least a suggestion of the possibility of an alliance in the fleeting image of the relationship between Pierrot and Majid's son. In March 2006, largely unforeseen and powerful demonstrations took place among young people and unionists in Paris against the new employment law. The news said, aside from their representation in this unforeseen movement against the economic logic of the neo-liberal order, that temporary workers' organisations – those most affected by the new law – were seeking contacts among unemployed young African and Islamic youths from the fringe suburbs. It seems that the encounter did not take place.

But if it could take place, it would be the articulation of a completely new historic block at the core of modern European culture. This articulation would eventually depend on the double possibility of reinventing the need for and possibility of Communism; in other words, a society in which difference and equality are combined – in the context of the impossibility, the failure of historical Communism. Suely Roelnik talked in this conference about the 'affective exorcism' of art by Brazilian artist Lygia Clark. Perhaps we could imagine an affective Communism in the same way.

Yet, like Haneke, I am not here to offer a solution, a task that would require a political possibility that goes far beyond what we can undertake in the world of art and criticism, although I don't believe our world is totally distant from achieving this

possibility. Besides, I am perfectly aware that I am also involved in the contradictions I am speaking of; that I am in a certain way Georges, the man in Haneke's film. What am I doing here, then, to return to my initial uncertainty? I could answer that I am a sort of reporter on the front line of the war of internal civilisations in developed nations, just like the reporters who went to the invasion of Iraq. But the reporter, like the artist or the critic, has an ambiguous function: he has the obligation to represent the truth of what is happening, but when doing so, not to forget the Biblical question of the Bible. He must ask himself: Who do you serve?

The particular difficulty facing us today is that it is easier to formulate this question clearly than to answer it.

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**Teresa Velázquez** Hello again, we are going to begin the speeches of the three participants in the round table. We have with us Ana Longoni, Paulo Herkenhoff and Gustavo Buntinx, who will broach the subject of subalternity from various points of view. Paulo will state the dichotomy between centre and periphery within Brazil itself, analysing how the logics of marginalisation of other cultures belonging to the coloniser is reproduced to a great degree in the colonised. Next, Ana Longoni will participate. Her presentation is centred around the relationships between art and politics in the modalities of artistic practice that were assumed by the social protest during the crisis and later transposition of these practices to museums. The question Longoni will address is whether the museum institution is, as happens with the street, a territory of conflict, or whether on the other hand it neutralises conflict. Lastly, Gustavo Buntinx will allude to the desire for a museum of contemporary art in Peru, in his opinion linked to the syndrome of marginal occidentalisation of certain elites that pursue the dream of an unattainable cosmopolitan institutional model. As opposed to this he will tell us about the experience of the MICROMUSEO (*'there's room at the back'*), as a viable alternative that has managed to collate a coherent collection based on rigorous critical discourse, in a praiseworthy effort in the context of Peruvian and Latin American art. The three speakers this afternoon are art historians and critics.

## PARADOXES OF A TRANSITION

ANA LONGONI

Within the setting of a more general consideration on – either possible or impossible – relationships between art and activism,<sup>73</sup> I question the difficulties and capabilities that are meant by different contemporary forms of transition or intersection between art institutions and social movements.

The popular uprising that started in December 2001 focused on Argentina the attention of intellectuals and activists, as well as artists and curators, from other parts of the world, mainly European, who perceived in this agitated process a sort of new social and cultural laboratory. Indeed, it even included ‘picketeering tourism’ to give an ironical – though apt – name to this flood of visitors who passed through (and at times stayed for a while), armed with cameras and good intentions, in district assemblies, recovered factories, pickets or street and avenue blockades.

Among other consequences, this focus of attention offered some visibility in the artistic international circuit to a series of practices which up till then had remained firmly on the sidelines of conventional exhibition areas and legitimacy in the art institution<sup>74</sup>, and which I will generically call here activist art.<sup>75</sup>

In this context and the setting of the reopening of the question on relationships between art and politics, avant-garde and activism (not only on a local level but – as we all know – an international one, at least from *Documenta X* onwards), is the vast circulation of some street-art groups that started in Buenos Aires (above all *Grupo de Arte Callejero*, *Etcétera...* and the *Taller Popular de Serigrafía* – silk-screen public workshop – linked to the new modalities that social protest assumed. Also insistent revisiting is being done to founding and, by now, legendary scenes such as *Tucumán Arde*, the most renowned artistic-political collective achievement of the Argentinian avant-garde movement carried out in 1968.

I start off from this diagnosis to attempt to define the problems based on a series of specific cases of the relationship, at times complex and contradictory, between activist initiatives, social movements and artistic institutions. I can identify at least three different ways that suggest this transition in the Argentina of the latest decades.

In the first place there are three variants of the already classic parable of avant-garde movements: the anti-artistic gesture finally integrated by art and engulfed by the museum. *Tucumán Arde* is – in one sense – a paradigmatic example of this movement, since it returned to the museum and is incorporated into the history of art which it had emphatically renounced. In 1968 the avant-garde groups from Rosario and Buenos Aires violently broke away from the international circuit which until then contained them, and became associated with the combat workers centre opposing

73 This text is an implicit dialogue with a provocative article by Brian Holmes, ‘El poker mentiroso’ (Liars’ Poker), published in the magazine *Brumaria*, Issue 2, 2003, Madrid, which considers similar dilemmas in European cases.

74 I understand as ‘art Institution’ not only material institutions, museums, academies, galleries, but also the ideas about art that prevail during an era. This is as defined by Peter Bürger in *Teoría de la Vanguardia*, Madrid, Península, 1992.

75 I use the term ‘activist art’ hesitantly because some of the groups mentioned here resist being defined as ‘artists’ and their practices as ‘art’, but see them as a specific form of militancy linked with creative strategies of political communication.



the dictatorship of General Onganía in an attempt to generate a new active aesthetics in the current political process, underscored by the radicalisation of the new political and cultural left wing and the perspective of the imminent revolutionary triumph. If *Tucumán Arde* can be confused with a political act, this is because it *was* effectively a political act: it involved the dissolution of the boundaries of art and at the same time a conscious use of artistic resources to seek greater political efficiency.

In the current recovery of *Tucumán Arde*, the key notes are discontinuous and emphasise different dimensions of that achievement: it is acknowledged as one of the initial landmarks of Latin American conceptualism, as a forerunner of militant research, collective creativity, action art, etc. The remnants of this achievement (records, testimonies, documents) are part of the many and important exhibitions of recent years.<sup>76</sup> The risks of aestheticisation and decontextualisation by introducing this achievement into the museum are evident. Yet, at the same time, its recovery enables the reactivation and start of a critical legacy that until recently had been left marginalised in art history. I will return to this paradoxical question further on.

A second transition is that of the collaborative movement between artists and social movements: initiatives of people (associated or not with the artistic world) that generate a creative element in the setting of a social movement, which is adopted by the crowd. Homi Bhaba alludes to this type of initiative when pointing out that: 'The forms of popular rebellion or mobilisation are usually more subversive and transgressive when they are created by means of opposing cultural practices.'<sup>77</sup> The movement of the *Sem Terra en Brasil* – which Suely Rolnik referred to in her speech at this symposium – is a good example of this option.

Another example is *El Siluetazo* (Silhouetting), the most memorable artistic-political practice that supplied a powerful visibility in public terrain of vindications made by the human rights movement in Argentina during the early eighties, still during the time of the last dictatorship. It consisted in simply tracing an outline of a life-sized human body on paper and sticking it on walls of the city, as a way of representing the 'presence of an absence', that of the thousands of people that were under arrest or 'disappeared' by state terrorism, and demanding their return alive. The procedure was an initiative of three visual artists, and its creation received contributions from the Mothers, the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and other human rights organisations as well as political militants. *El Siluetazo* involved the participation – in a makeshift and immense outdoor workshop that lasted well into the night – of hundreds of protesters who drew, the silhouettes and later pasted them on walls, monuments and trees during the III Resistance March in the Plaza de Mayo in September 1983. This marks one of those exceptional moments in history when an artistic initiative matches a social demand and takes shape through the impulse of a multitude. From then on it became a force-

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76 The exhibitions in which *Tucumán Arde* participated are 'Global Conceptualism', Museum of Queens (New York, 1999), 'Heterotopías', Museo Reina Sofía (Madrid, 2000), 'El arte de los medios', Museo de Bellas Artes (Buenos Aires, 2000), 'Antagonismos', Macba (Barcelona, 2002), 'Arte y Política en los 60', Palais de Glace (Buenos Aires, 2002), 'Ex Argentina', Museo Ludwig (Köln, 2004) and Palais de Glace (Buenos Aires, 2006), 'Ambulantes' (Sevilla, 2004), 'La sociedad de los artistas' (Museo Castgano, Rosario, 2004), 'Inverted Utopias' (Houston, 2004), 'How do you want to be governed?' (Barcelona and Miami, 2004), 'Be what you want but stay where you are' (Rotterdam, 2005), 'Collective creativity', Fridericianum Museum (Kassel, 2005), 'Archivo Tucumán Arde', Gallery Nova (Zagreb, 2005), 'Again for Tomorrow', Royal Collage of Art (London, 2006), 'Conceptual Art', Generalli Foundation (Viena, 2006), 'Documenta 12' (Kassel, 2007), 'Costuras Urbanas', Le Bon Accueil (Rennes, 2007).

77 Homi Bhabha, 'El compromiso con la teoría' in: *El lugar de la cultura*, Buenos Aires, Manantial, 2002, p. 40.

ful visual ‘public’ resource whose use expanded spontaneously. The fact is that at that time the silhouettes were not presented by their promoters nor read by their witnesses or the press as ‘art’, but rather as ‘a graphic product’, a visual resource for battling and remembrance, whose great power is based on the collective and spontaneous creation that recovers public space in spite of the prevailing repressive atmosphere.

Twenty years later, the resource of the silhouettes has been installed as one of the most persistent forms of representation of the Disappeared, and its use is recurrent both in artistic gatherings and in visual symbols of the human rights movement. Let us consider two recent short examples. The building of the Escuela Mecánica de la Armada (Navy Mechanical School) or ESMA, in which the largest detention centre for torture and extermination of the last dictatorship was based, the place in which 5,000 people disappeared, was handed over on 24 March 2004 to human rights organisations to construct a memorial site – in an event with enormous symbolic meaning that inaugurated a new phase of the human rights movement which we could call the ‘institutionalisation of memory’. In these circumstances, the organisations called on well-known artists to make silhouettes that were installed around the building. The result, far removed from the powerful one of the crowd making silhouettes in the square, consisted in a set of ‘authored’ silhouettes, placed not on streets next to protesters but (once again) behind bars.

In contrast, another silhouette, installed among many others in the setting of an exhibition that took up all of the Centro Cultural Recoleta of Buenos Aires on the 30th anniversary of the last coup d’état, states a very suggestive connection with the present. Javier del Olmo – a member of *Arde! Arte*, one of the activist art groups that arose from the popular revolt of December 2001 – constructed a life-sized figure on the wall of the exhibition space with an endless number of sealed labels, each bearing the name of one of the 1,888 victims of police repression under democracy denounced up till that moment. I see a new paradox in the contrast of these two recent events of *El Siluetazo*: that appeal based on a social movement does not guarantee the vitality of a practice, nor is its inclusion in a museum necessarily its death certificate.

A similar case to that of *El Siluetazo*, something Gustavo Buntinx knows a lot about as he was one of its active promoters, is the experience known as *Lava la bandera* (*Washing the Flag*), carried out by the *Sociedad Civil* group of Peru. In the setting of the growing opposition to the dictatorship of Alberto Fujimori, a ‘participational ritual of national cleaning ... took place under the relative protection of the Fair for Democracy that various civilian organisations put together on 20-21 May 2000 in the central Campo de Marte’.<sup>78</sup> The action of washing Peruvian flags in the public square and later spreading them out to dry in the sun was repeated four days before the second round of election balloting in the Plaza Mayor of Lima, and every Friday in the fountain of this square until the dictator was overthrown.

Two years later, on 9 July 2002 (Argentina’s Independence Day), an action was carried out convened by the *Arde! Arte* group that emulated and paid tribute to the Peruvians and at the same time charged the action with a new meaning, as it no longer alluded to cleaning the country of the corruption of the regime, but denounced its violence: this time, instead of washing flags they were covered in blood.

The second option I refer to, then, implies diluting art in social movement in a process that could be roughly described as a set of subjects involved in artistic circuits (pro-

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78 Collective statement by ‘Lava la bandera’, Lima, 2000.

ducers, theorists), who have specific knowledge and place it at the disposal of a crowd that takes them over and reformulates a certain creative proposal (creating silhouettes, washing the flag) as a form of protest.

The inverse movement, which shapes the third possibility I am going to refer to, can also happen: the transition of politics towards art. I find it among groups of intellectuals and activists whose practice and knowledge were removed from the 'world of art' but in recent years have found themselves brought into the museum of contemporary art when they become part of the circuit, in an unexpected position of legitimacy. Thus cases such as the Bolivian group *Mujeres creando* or the Argentinian group *Colectivo Situaciones* shape an intellectual figure who is in a way the opposite of that described by Pierre Bourdieu when considering Emile Zola and that author's public denouncement of anti-Semitism in the Dreyfus case, in the sense that it is one who uses his or her specific symbolic capital to intervene legitimately outside the literary field.<sup>79</sup> In the cases I mentioned as well as others, the specific capital validating the intervention of intellectual initiatives within the artistic field is basically carried out outside the field.

In a little more detail, I would like to review how a novel mode of fighting in the human rights movement of Argentina takes place: the *escrache* becomes 'art' when entering a museum or when interpreted in this vein by the artistic institution. The *escraches* made their appearance in the mid-nineties fostered by *HIJOS* (a group formed by the sons and daughters of those imprisoned or disappeared during the last dictatorship). *Escrachar* means – in Rio de la Plata jargon – to out, make obvious, bring to light. The *escrache* proved over the last ten years to be an efficient and revitalised form of direct collective action to make obvious the impunity of the repressors and back the social condemnation of the people who live and work with them, regardless of their background. Each *escrache* is based on research, proceeds by means of a long task of awareness-raising among the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and finally ends up as a street demonstration at the very door of the house or place of work of the repressor who is being '*escrachado*' or outed.

Two art groups – which have already celebrated a decade of activity – played an important part in the creation of the *escraches*: the GAC (Grupo de Arte Callejero) or Group of Street Art, and *Etcétera*. Since 1998, the GAC has created the graphics of the *escraches*. Their characteristic signs subvert road signs, being installed like normal traffic signs (for the unaware spectator these could go unnoticed, as they are the same size, colours, typography, material, etc.). These signs indicate, for example, the proximity of the current domicile of a repressor, his or her workplace, a former secret detention centre, the places from where the so-called 'death flights' took off (in which sequestered people were thrown into Rio de la Plata alive from the aircraft) or where clandestine maternity centres operated.

On the other hand, *Etcétera* supplied a carnival performative dimension to the *escraches* by carrying out – in the middle of the demonstrations each *escrache* ends in – with its wild theatrical performances, with large puppets, masks or disguises in which people represented grotesque torture scenes, repressors in the act of taking a newborn baby into captivity, a soldier cleaning his conscience by confessing to a priest, or a football match confronting Argentinians with other Argentinians in an allusion to

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79 Pierre Bourdieu, *Las reglas del arte*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 1995.

the Falklands War. They used these performances as a distraction and dispersal tactic against police squads, to enable others to approach the place to be outed and daubed with red paint.

The strategy of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (who were the indisputable front-line of resistance against the dictatorship and maintained unflinchingly the denouncement of state terrorism) was centred on the vindication of the repression victims, mainly the Disappeared, while the *escraches* concentrated on the victimisers who remained unpunished, protected by the pardon dictated by successive democratic governments. The Mothers focused on their weekly rounds in the central Plaza de Mayo (which symbolises the concentration of political, economic and ecclesiastic power of the country), whereas the *escraches* on the other hand were dispersed in districts and cities all over the country, reaching the Underground (whose security chief was an ex-repressor), police stations in marginalised districts (where the same torture and assassination methods are still carried out), the wealthy districts where genocidal generals live, and the most remote and hidden rural locations in which kidnapping and extermination of opposition members were also perpetrated.

At first, both the graphics of the GAC and the performances of *Etcétera* were completely invisible to the artistic field as they were 'art actions', but on the other hand they supplied a strong identity and social visibility to the *escraches*, and contributed to making them evident as a new and powerful form of fighting against impunity.

In recent years, what has changed as far as the *escraches* are concerned has been their presence within the international artistic circuit. When the two groups were called to join (along with other activist artists) and form part of various curatorial projects and exhibit their work in prestigious exhibition circles (including the Venice Biennial), the *escraches* reached museums. How does one resolve – in this and other similar cases – the transition from street protests to exhibition halls, the tension between political action and the artistic feature, the span between its precise incidence in the Argentinian context and its inscription in a distant and different space?

In the first place, it is obviously not the *escrache* that enters the museum but its bare remnants, or at any rate its registration (photos, video, testimony or other documents), or theoretical or interpretational references on its implications or its novelty. Nor can either *Tucumán Arde* or *El Siluetazo* enter the museum insofar as they are unique events and – to a certain degree – unrepresentable, that took place in precise historical contexts, on the streets and articulated with specific social movements, carried out by a concrete collective subject of the time that no longer exists, or is not the same. It is clear that in this mediation the impact of a collective action that wishes to influence a concrete situation and transform participants and occasional spectators is minimised or diluted.

Are they then inaccessible situations in their dimension as an experience from the showcase of a museum? What happens when an opposition political practice or – using a term proposed by John Beverley – 'insurgent' is read as an artistic form, or when action modalities are moved from the street to the museum space? Or perhaps the question we must address is much more pragmatic: what is gained and what is lost by the inclusion of *escraches* in exhibition halls?

The risks of including this type of activist practice in museums are known. One, a 'politically correct' neutralisation of its radical political condition, the banal distance of aestheticisation of a spotless staging, a formalisation of action practices that become

works of art to be contemplated. Two, the decontextualised cut-out caused by the fact of extracting a part that can adapt to an exhibition format and be made fit to be exhibited under a regime of visibility (for example, a poster), even though in its origins it only worked as a segment of processes that were very complex, discrete and ‘invisible’. Three, the difficult communication with a public that is distant from the event being shown which requires a precise reconstruction and reposition of information (which runs the risk of being a didactic element), is to try to give keys to interpretation or contextualisation that allow access to material that would otherwise be hermetic, insofar as its condition is at best fragmentary. Four, the fact that they acquire the status of ‘works of art’ or pieces of a collection formed by the material remnants of a type of production or practice that is now removed from the market. Subjecting these practices to the exhibition hall can be a burden and obstacle, much more so when they are action modalities that are still in current use (such as the *escraches*), and not past events that have been concluded.

Yet is the museum of contemporary art just a space that neutralises the potency of these practices? Let us consider some slightly more optimistic alternatives concerning transition from the streets to the museum. In the first place, international visibility of a practice that acts against the immunity of Argentinian people found guilty of genocide can spread and replicate in other places and to meet other needs, and encompass the potential connection between different experiences and moments which are distant in space and time. Is it possible to aspire to the museum turning into a public tribunal to spread them and contribute to socialising these tools in other contexts? Can it help to build up, discuss and spread a legacy available for many, mutating into a living file, open and active with experiences that are present and past in an articulated space of collective debate and factory for new thought?

Secondly, transitions from the streets to the museum give these groups or movements access to resources (not only economic) that can reinforce the activist work beyond the museum, normally subjected to very precarious and difficult conditions.

In the third place, the echoes beyond the country can serve as argument to collaborate in preserving the groups there committed to resisting repressive violence, even if it appears that the inclusion of *escraches* in prestigious European museums matters very little to the local repressive forces. As happens with many other *escraches*, the one carried out in La Plata on an ex-police officer involved in state terrorism, in December 2006, was harshly repressed by the provincial police – the same police suspected of being involved in the disappearance of Jorge Julio López, a key witness in the trial of an ex-repressor, an almost eighty-year-old survivor of a concentration camp under the last dictatorship, who disappeared once again in September 2006, a day after offering the legal authorities his testimony, which was crucial for condemning and jailing the ex-chief of police of Buenos Aires, Miguel Etchecolaz.

Existing crossovers between insurgent protest modalities and the institutional art circuit are, in sum, complex and full of paradoxes.

‘There are many ways of political writing whose different effects are obscured when a division is made between “theory” and “activism”,’ states Bhabha.<sup>80</sup> The same can be said of art and activism. For this reason, rather than establishing sharp division lines or Manichean perspectives between dominant culture and subordinate practices, or

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80 Op. cit., p. 42.

between art and politics, such as those I have mentioned here, perhaps it is more convenient to rethink the modern category of art as a limited circle, taking the risk of seeing its frontiers crumble. We are facing productions that justly force us to review the condition of the autonomy of art, not because they are subject to the impositions of power or the market, but because they attempt to influence current living conditions. On the other hand, the insistence in the anti-institutional parameter on measuring the radical nature of artistic practice appears to point out an overstatement and restrictive bond that constrains approximations to concrete history between art and politics. According to this reasoning, institutionalisation of political art or – more precisely – its lack of an anti-institutional will, would match it up with the fact that the political sense of some gestures is restricted to the artistic circle, in other words, cancelled or neutralised. Activist art groups are not unaware of the fact that their interventions in institutional convocations place them in a problematic position. Moving between inside and outside the museum, rather than being incoherent, opportunistic or unthinking, can show a political capacity to decide to install a critical element from which to question new (other) spectators.

Is it naive – or cynical – to sustain the possibility itself of a radical gesture of art within institutional contexts that sustain the logic of cultural capitalism? Does all that happens in art belong to the dominant culture insofar as its effects – and its audience – are restricted? Does nothing there escape dominant logic? Do the limits of art overlap with the limits of the museum? Or, as Benjamin Buchloh pointed out in his presentation at this meeting, is art still a territory available to question ruling culture? These are questions that go far beyond these brief lines, that barely fire up the current debate.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** It is somewhat difficult for me to speak in Spanish, but I will try. I would also like to say that I have changed my lecture, because after yesterday's conversation I decided to propose something different from a mere commentary on multi-culturalism. I would like to dedicate this conference to Lisette Lagnado and the team of curators of the 27th Biennial of São Paulo (Adriano Pedrosa and José Roca are here with us now), because this weekend we experienced in Brazil one of the most violent attacks I have seen in authoritarian and obscure critiques. In Brazil there is great difficulty in discussing social differences through art. It is very easy to embrace what is politically correct, without establishing alternatives to discuss the root of the problems. Thus I believe that we at this marvellous gathering must look favourably on the Biennial. After what was written about it this weekend, I would like to oppose publicly the opinion [these critics have] created, and the way the Biennial was not analysed, outside and within São Paulo.

I would mention three levels of subalternity that are intermingled currently. These would be:

1. Class structures. Brazil, along with Haiti, has the dubious privilege of having the worst social structure in the Americas. And at the same time, it is necessary to recognise as the starting point of the problem that the world of art in Brazil is the world of white people. I will speak about some laws, because this is a problem I am developing: laws of the history of art and institutional action in Brazil.
2. The violent internal colonialism that has been established in Brazil during the past twenty-five years.



3. And, lastly, the international side. I don't want to position myself as a Latin American victim, but rather point out certain problems. Although in the end the internal subordination problems within Brazil today are worse than the international ones. I will very quickly go over the internal colonialism law. Rio de Janeiro, from where I am speaking, produces 85% of the crude oil of Brazil. Brazil is self-sustaining as far as oil is concerned, but it receives zero cents in taxes. This is the only product of the country that benefits the State that consumes it. This is already in itself a dependence that is spoken about as internal colonialism, because the economic and industrial power of Brazil is São Paulo, but São Paulo does not produce energy. We did not need a war in Iraq; simply changing an aspect of the Constitution articulated by the centre-right party would have been enough.

The second stage in the articulation of internal colonialism has been the concentration, also in São Paulo, of the head offices of the country's banks. Excepting one or two important banks, all the rest are located there today. This means that the economic restructuring of the country is based not only on internal decisions, but also decisions taken abroad. The third important point in this process is the Ruané law, the law of patronage, which grants a great advantage to investments in culture in Brazil. At this moment it is concentrated in São Paulo, which enables this triumph of culture in São Paulo, but the patronage law is a sort of cancer there, because its wickedness is that it has transferred public funds to decisions made in the banks' marketing departments. Thus, in Brazil when one has an idea, the interlocutor will be the marketing director of a bank or large company. Let us say that I am speaking from the idea of a carioca diaspora, because the city has lost a lot of its economy, and I must add as a background note, that I have read Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*, including his Spanish example of the disputes between Madrid and Barcelona.

Yet this moment of triumph corresponds to a historic process in which we have, on the one hand, Mario de Andrade's attitude, for example, in constructing a modern project that basically traversed the symbolic centre of this process in São Paulo and, on the other, the symbolic deconstruction of Rio de Janeiro. Perhaps the most violent page of Brazilian culture is the description of Rio de Janeiro by Mario de Andrade when he starts off on his travels as an apprentice tourist in the North of Brazil. From the ship, in the harbour of Rio, he imagines the destruction of the city with hallucinating cries of horror and rivers of blood. The next victims of this process will be, on a global level, Buenos Aires and Mexico D.F.

Well, but the question of the history of internal colonialism would not be one for the most important university in Brazil, as it would mean dismantling, deconstructing its historic task. For example, in the history of art, if one reads the writings of Aracy Amaral one gets a sequence of construction of this symbolic space for São Paulo, which is legitimate, but at the cost of the permanent deconstruction of Rio de Janeiro in the Brazilian historic process.

From this process of visual colonisation in the country, one moves on to a colonisation of the Iberian Peninsula's view of Brazil. I would like to mention two exhibitions: the exhibition on Brazilian modernism in the Chiado museum and the *Antropofagia* exhibition in the IVAM. And, as an example, I mention the part played by Rubén Fernandes, the photographic historian, in eliminating the presence of modern photography in Rio de Janeiro and establishing frameworks that correspond to this project of erecting, and I use the word with all its ambiguity, a pinnacle and central role played by São Paulo.



I will say the following thing. To start with, on an international level there is a law of the history of art as a history of exclusion. I would mention four situations in the 1980s: *The Spiritual in Art*, the exhibition held in Los Angeles County Museum which did not include Mira Schendel. It is difficult to think that in the 20th century an artist as sensitive to spirituality as Mira Schendel should be excluded. She brought, without being aware of her Jewishness, the entire culture of the book to her works and drawings. If one reads *L'écriture de la différence* by Derrida, Milaxendo could be right alongside Edmond Jabès in the demonstration of this relationship between book culture and Judaism. She is Brazilian, as we all know, from São Paulo. I would like to point out that obviously what I am saying here does not allude to Marcelo Araujo nor Suely Rolnik, who are also from São Paulo. I should state first that Suely, in the Biennial I headed in 1998, wrote the best and only academic response I received in Brazil to the biennial we did. Marcelo, on the other hand, has always been a great companion and a museum-management model for the country. I believe that Suely and Marcelo alone, on the academic side and the institutional management side respectively, are two models for Brazil from São Paulo, aren't they? Excuse me? [Suely and Marcelo answer from the public seats.] No, you are not the only ones.

The second matter I bring up here – excuse me for not bringing any exact names of the exhibitions – was the exhibition on sound and music in art of the 20th century which was organised in Frankfurt. There Oiticica was excluded, and I believe that there is no other artist who has surpassed Oiticica with regards to the relationship between art and music. I think that in terms of jazz this artist is comparable to Mondrian and Pollock, a figure who can be more and more considered as epitomising the great relationship between the senses through music. Oiticica went from European music of the 18th century all the way to samba and rock, including Varèse, Cage, etc. The third example is *Qu'est que c'est la sculpture moderne?* by Mario Trova. I was enchanted by the exhibition, and I enjoyed reading a reference to something that took place in Argentina, but this I believe corresponds to a moment when it was not necessary to go.

The fourth example I bring you is the *Pasajes de la escultura moderna* by Rosalind Krauss. Before detailing a bit more about Krauss, I would like to mention that, as in the 1950s, with Mario Pedrosa, but above all in the 1960s, three Brazilian critics researched the possibilities of building a model for the production of native art in borderline countries in the third world. Pedrosa compared the matter of advanced capitalism with Soviet bureaucracy; he was a Trotskyite and believed that in the rupture with modernity there would be a possibility for invention. Gullar, based on Lukács, suggests another development model that would be searching for roots. Haroldo de Campos, who drinks from Marx and Engels, states that ever since the colonial period, we already had an cannibalistic culture production, that this idea would be one of absorbing all influences, opening out to all possibilities, to produce something that would be instantly necessary without even being an aesthetic model. Cannibalism has always been a cultural attitude model. On the other hand if we read Pedrosa, if we attempt to build the text that collects everything, we see that Pedrosa, who was the critic on the side of Oiticica, Clark and many others, constructed a certain theory of art. In the first place, he stated that the history of art should not be viewed as a consecutive series of *isms*. In the second place, he disagreed with Barr, who had been his great ally in the 2nd Biennial of São Paulo, who even lent him *Guernica* to travel

to São Paulo, because Barr did not consider Volpe, who was to be the most extreme and sublime moment of colour in Brazil. Then Pedrosa said that Barr believed we had to continue with the constructive or Picassian models. In the third place, Pedrosa considered that history of art is not a repertoire of images to be reinterpreted. Pedrosa, due to his relationships with artists as different as Lygia Clark, tells artists that what should interest to them is to do something never seen before. In other words, what interests him in Mondrian is the Mondrian he would never be able to do, the one beyond Mondrian himself. In other words, history of art should be considered as a set of problems. For this reason the colour in Oiticica spreads out of the wall, exits the grey domain and occupies the world. In this process I mention what I call the Law of Lygia Pape. I admire Krauss a lot, and once I replaced her precise description of *Columns* by Robert Morris with the *Baile Neoconcreto* by Lygia Pape, and they matched almost exactly; there was just a small difference in timing – and the fact is that Lygia had done her dance five or six years earlier. At MoMA I did an exhibition titled *The marriage of reason and squalor*, based on Frank Stella's painting of the same name, and next to it I inserted an engraving by Lygia Pape. The same formal organisation, the same source in Albers, a certain similarity in relationships between geometry and organics, with a one-year difference. And there I stayed, listening to curators, critics, reactions. They all said Stella didn't see it, that he couldn't know her. So the Law of Lygia Pape is the following: if an artist of a subalternate country or bordering country, whatever we want to call it, does something later, this artist is a by-product; if the one doing the later work is a metropolitan artist, he has the benefit of the doubt: that he or she was unaware of the previous work.

Right away, to come closer to Krauss, I mention the Law of November. What happens is that the publication titled *October* takes a month to arrive in Brazil. So we could say that a *Greenbergianism* is adopted by Michael Fried without us having a look at it, a historic recognition and the chance to argue back, comparable to that of Michael Fried on Brazilian art. Then we have a substitution in that Greenberg moment of all that was meant by the Brazilian material on phenomenology through Pedrosa and Gullar, with very precise and punctual readings of Husserl, Cassirer, Susanna Lange, Merleau-Ponty. Everything we saw yesterday is related to that.

The Krauss matter is not one, we could say, that I can attribute to her. Of course, Lygia Clark was unknown at the time she wrote her book. But it is not including neoconcrete sculpture in this book that will cause her to be taken over by a process of degradation of neoconcretism. Out of all we saw yesterday by Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, one concludes that if it is not sanctioned by *October*, then it is not valid. Thus for example, when a critic such as Rodrigo Nalves commented on the 24th Bienal of São Paulo he stated that Clark and Oiticica are official artists. One does not understand why, but he said it. A biennial with Polke and Richter, and crying out for the presence of Kiefer! For Nalves himself, who agreed to speak during the inauguration of the exhibition by Oiticica, to doubt him, when what we needed was to get to know Oiticica! With Ronaldo Brito, Rodrigo Nalves does not need a Hilton Kramer. Now I want to take a leap in time. At the beginning of the 1970s sculptor Sergio Camargo returned to Brazil. In the middle of the crisis of 1964, when all the concretists abandoned their language, apart from a very few honourable exceptions, was when Camargo appeared on the scene with his objects. He had seen Grupo Zero, the Italians, etc., but he arrives as The Artist, with capital letters.

I say 1964, because that was the year of the Brazilian dictatorship. In other words, he arrives with neutral art at a time when there is a crisis in geometry, because he is not aware of the political situation of the country, and becomes transformed into a sort of official artist. He carries out murals for public schools in Rio de Janeiro, for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in São Paulo and the headquarters of the Bank of Brazil in New York. The concretist is transformed into someone made to measure for the dictatorship.

I am going to take another sideways leap, although I am not quite sure to which side. In the mid-1970s Rolando Brito wrote *Neoconcretismo*, in which he stated that Brazilian concretist production bypassed the market and therefore could not be inscribed in the history of art as the market is the instance for inscription, right? When Camargo returned to Brazil, in 1970, a group was created around him. They were promised intimacy with Brancusi, Fontana (whom he knew), with Francastel, who had been a mentor for him. In other words he created an imaginary field of very close relations with the history of art. At that time this group carried out an alliance with an art committee in São Paulo, and I bring you an example of such an interesting situation, which is what we saw yesterday. Paulo Sergio Duarte, the Clark critic whom I invited to write for the catalogue of the 24th Biennial of São Paulo, as he was the only person I knew who had studied with Lygia Clark's psychoanalyst in Paris (at the time in which Clark developed her projects of cannibalism and anthropophagic slime, a year after Ferreira had published his article 'The Melancholic Cannibal'). From my point of view, he was the only person I knew of who had experienced this process. He was asked to write, but he never wrote anything. Instead, when the Biennial opened, he had a catalogue published in the gallery he uses. In other words, there is a permanent link over twenty years between this group and the market.

I move on directly to a matter which is of great interest to me at the moment in Brazilian and Latin American art, which is that of the artist as exploiter of surplus value. I started to talk about art and the market, I talked about an effort to include Latin American art in the system of intellectual circulation and the international art market, I also mentioned the efforts of art and otherness. Now I pick up a paper and scissors and let myself present a plane, I twist it, fold it and we have a Moebius band. With the scissors I start walking, asking you not to watch me because this, as Suely said yesterday, is not transmittable, it is an immanent experience that cannot be sold or loaned and needs to be lived as a one-sided experience. At the same time, the inside and outside are together, they have something to do with Lacan's topologies and others, right? The continuity between Self and the Other. Lygia Clark said during the dictatorship, '*If I were poorer I would have done politics*' – excuse me, younger, '*If I were younger*', excuse me. The lapse is not entirely gratuitous. Each one must do what they can as a way of granting power to others at a time like a dictatorship, which wipes out any chance of deciding politically as citizens. But there is a matter, the matter of surplus value, which continues to be complicated. Oiticica and Clark have done their part, Clarice Lispector has done hers. Beverley spoke about the example of Stockhausen and terrorism as an aesthetic practice from the point of view of subalternity. This is the same as what Oiticica did with his tribute to Cara de Caballo, who was the most wanted bandit in Rio de Janeiro in the 1960s, when he said that for a society of totally rigid class-structures, crime could be the only way of confronting such staunchly anchored structures. Of this generation, I would like to mention Claudia Anduyar for her work with the

Iamomames Indians. Anduyar lived with them for a year or slightly longer. She took two thousand five hundred photos. She returned to São Paulo, and did not go back to photograph the Iamomames but rather reinterpreted them according to the problems of Brazilian society. When she started this work, the way Brazilian society considered the Indians was as a mixture of animals and human beings. And Claudia Anduyar revealed their cosmologic world, their affection; she tries to prove that the expansion of capitalism in the national society should not imply genocide.

In the new generation of artists I am only interested in those who are capable of transforming the other, first into a subject, subject of expression... but there would be no subject of expression without a subject of economy next to the artist. Of the works I am aware of I will only point out the names of Alejandra Sequeira in Amazonia, Rosana Palasian, working with children in conflict with the law, Bene Fonteles in a society in the interior of Bahia – she produced a book and all her sales benefit the community directly – Paula Tropic working with street and favela children in Río to distribute with them, half and half, the economic results of cultural production. Finally, the one that moved me most was Ernesto Salmerón, an artist from Nicaragua. And this is worth a minute's delay. Ernesto is the son of a doctor in the Sandinista army who, due to his medical duties, attended the wounded on both sides. He recently found a wall in Nicaragua with Sandino graffiti. He took it out of there, placed a frame around it and added wheels. Then he invited a group of men who had fought in the revolution, members of the Sandinista army and the Contras, who are now together in a total political wilderness, and one of them placed this chunk of wall on a truck, one of the Russian trucks that arrived in Nicaragua during the revolution. This totally decorated truck now serves a financial need, and is called *El Gringo*.

Finally, with *El Gringo*, they arrived at the Central American Biennial and won the award. The prize will be invested in building a repairs garage, a way of offering work to this group of Contras and Sandinistas, as a project of a type of diagram of possible ways to live together, which is the theme of the 27th Biennial of São Paulo. Thank you.

A HALF-BREED MUSEALITY,  
A PROMISCUOUS MUSEALITY  
NEW ROUTES TO A MICROMUSEO  
GUSTAVO BUNTINX

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*Modern painting in Peru is mobile. Each Volkswagen beetle two-door taxi, endlessly flattened out and retouched with every imaginable sort of paint and the most unexpected materials, creates a demented show that is post-everything. The support for Peruvian painting requires the necessary impulsion for infinite retouching of that surface that is almost unmentionable due to its heterogeneity.* Carlos Leppe

*Museum void*

Although frequently referred to sarcastically in the so-called First World, the museum institution maintains itself for certain contexts as an object of radical desire. Extreme fringe contexts such as those in Peru, whose cultural density are only surpassed by their economic and political miseries. Above all political: it is enough just to point out the historical irresponsibility of certain dominant groups there, proverbial for their incapacity to rise up as leaders, and far less able to offer a national view, even (or above all), in the decisive field of cultural construction of an idea of community, no matter how imaginary or imagined.

There are few situations as symptomatic of this failure as the absolute absence of an art museum in Lima that is specifically contemporary or even 'modern' (almost the only Latin American capital exhibiting this feat). An extreme absence: the theme here is not a museum that lacks elements but rather the lack of a museum itself. Our great *museum void*.

Implicit in this missing element is a social and political emptiness that goes far beyond this: the institutionalism lacking here is precisely that which is more associated to the affirmation of own and current identities that arise from the intercourse between cultural and economic elites. Yet as relevant as this museum failing is the different libido that subsequent frustration generates in some sectors, anxious to generate new settings, renewed scenes for an updated and autonomous cultural sense.

An artistically articulated spatiality is not precisely a priority in terms of an alliance with economic and political powers, defined from a global point of view, but rather a local specific encounter between enlightened petit bourgeois and emerging popular elements. A creative friction in which subservient elements break out – interrupt any illusion of seamless continuity between dominant cultures of the centre and those of the outskirts. But also any naive notion of uniformity for critical culture that is thus built up by means of counterpoints that are not always harmonious.

Frictional strategies whose dynamic principle is not to repress but rather productivise the differences. Within this perspective a variety of gestures and works are incisive in Peruvian plastic arts of recent decades: cuts and breaks from which pulses emanate and flow due to more properly speaking institutional initiatives, sometimes with a markedly ironic subtext. And utopia: this is the case of the Museum of Hawaii, conceived at the end of the last decade by Fernando Bryce. Or the LIMAC, conceptually and pictorially stated by Sandra Gamarra in recent years. Although not in quite

the terms suggested here, the precedents for this attitude date back to at least 1966. In October of that year, the group known as Arte Nuevo proclaimed its rebellion against the first Biennial of Lima and the establishment of plastic arts in general, exhibiting their works in a vacant hardware shop which they called Adam's Belly-button and announced as utopia headquarters of the future Museum of Modern Art in Lima. 'Utopia' also means 'nowhere', and in 1970 one of the ex-members of that group – Emilio Hernández Saavedra – would give this concept a literal and at the same time metaphorical sense when publishing the image of the *Erased Museum of Art*, a doctored photograph in which the Museum of Art of Lima disappears from its urban context, leaving an eloquent white cut-out. The now called MALI was then perceived as a paradigm of an outdated artistic convention that was deficient (a position which transformations in recent years have made unsustainable).

This simple gesture expands and subverts another similar one by Robert Rauschenberg and his *De Kooning Erased Drawing* (1953), of which he was probably unaware. Peru was already dominated by the military regime of General Juan Velasco Alvarado, in a process of questioning social matters as well that put doubt on and inserted crisis into any established idea of museality.<sup>81</sup> When, barely a year later, the Institute of Contemporary Art offered Francisco Mariotti the chance of carrying out an individual exhibition in the Museum of Italian Art, he chose to open that enclosure to the large park surrounding it and to all sorts of participation. In this way the first of several 'festivals of total art' was generated, removing hierarchies in the artistic space par excellence, as stated in the graphic setting of the official guide map of the distribution of activities for that opening edition that became known as *Contacta*.

Something in the totemic implications of that plan insinuated a certain early response to liberated incitements freed by Hernández' conceptual irony. But the latter was offered as an exceptional image for a need that was still not resolved at that time.

A cut-out – in space and now in time – ever more replete with meanings.

Counterpoints: beyond the extremity of the Peruvian case, it is obvious that the sole idea of a museum constitutes a contested place for the setting-up of identities in constant transformation and conflict, even where the existence of a museum is uncertain or nil. It is thus necessary to dig into not only the emptiness of a museum but also the museotopias built on this absence, this abyss.

That hollow: the emptiness of a museum can at the same time be erotically perceived as something that cries out to be filled. It is also so in a social sense. Radical. In both senses of the term: to go to the roots it is necessary also to reach the extremes, or at least tour them.

### *Museotopia*

Wherever there is emptiness there is a desire. In May 1980 the E.P.S. Huayco workshop managed to alter the usual sleepiness of the Peruvian plastic environment with an exhibition whose unusual freshness was announced by its very name: *Passing Art*. Retrospectively today, we can perceive in that project the most fully articulated expression – also the least explicit and most misunderstood – of a political art identifying with the alternatives of certain socialist (non-Maoist) utopias, which since

81 To view an analysis of these transitions, see, 1997 and 2003a. *El Museo de Arte borrado* was published by Hernández Saavedra, 1970.

1977 had been reaching out for power. A powerful revolution in speech and social consciousness which, in fact, postulated strategic alliances between less radical means and the large groups of migrant people – indigenous and half-bloods – who had been transforming the capital and other important cities of the country into their own image and style, and at the same time were also transformed by that traumatic and decisive experience.<sup>82</sup>

Among the works exhibited in *Passing Art*, an allusive engraving by Maria Zevallos stood out. In it she reproduces – with no re-elaborations or ‘artistic concessions’ – one of the aggressive adverts that were until recently frequently seen on public transport vehicles, transforming them into popular visual galleries. It is, to be precise, in a minibus, which is represented in the silk-screen print in which a young girl with burning orange hair and shiny black boots makes the driver and passengers drool at her dangerous mini skirt, looking at her with wide-open eyes.

In the original sticker, the typical Lima girl requests – with a radio in her hand – the driver to close the door slowly so as not to interrupt her listening to her favourite radio station (Radio Mar), whose exact frequency is underlined on the right-hand sign of the image. In the interpretation by E.P.S. Huayco, this numerical identity is kept but the advertising message is replaced by an unusual announcement: ‘Get off at the Museum of Modern Art!’.

The phrase is disconcerting because of the well-known non-existence of a museum of this type in Lima. But it is also unusual because of the context it is pronounced in. Doubtlessly the engraving sums up the demand of an institution that backs contemporary visual manifestations. But this need – well known in Peru – implies here a ceaseless questioning of the existing art circuit of here, and the colonised idea of what is (post)modern which prevails there.<sup>83</sup> This is proved by the characters and the atmosphere unusually associated by this silk-screen print to a museality that one would consider distant from them. A contrast that extends in another way in the dominant purple colour of the image, alluding perhaps to the colour of the vestments of Our Lord of Miracles whose cult identifies with traditional Lima.

It is in this conventional dialogue between tradition and modernity that this and other parallel images disrupt so extremely their option by choosing a style that subverts both categories, kicking over the traces by incorporating the shapes and contents of a popular modernity that migration generates in the capital and its suburbs. A (post) modernity that is peculiar and unique, as transgressive of international models as of local conventions; transgressive even of a certain notion of avant-gardeness established from cosmopolitan models and subverted here from the most immediate experience of popular elements, of a subalternity that also rises up in cultural and aesthetic terms. The result is a deliberately crude style, which places the work within what has become known as pop ‘achorado’: an adjective taken from popular speech to describe the informal, even insolent or ‘wild’ attitudes that nowadays prevail among the poor urban population and the new generations of mixed-blood citizens in their impetuous takeover of all the symbolic resources available for social advancement. This bubbling

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82 A more in-depth interpretation of the E.P.S. Huayco proposal and its historic context can be seen in Buntinx, 2005a.

83 The concept itself of modernity becomes problematic in societies as historically fragmented as the Peruvian one. The subject becomes even more complex if one tries to include the notion of postmodernity. For this reason I would rather place this prefix in parenthesis, as an orthographical signal of the still fluid and uncertain nature of the cultural condition it alludes to.



cultural universe in which massive visuality is combined with rough hand-crafted techniques to express the new popular culture – the new (post)modernity – which migration generates in the capital and its suburbs, a violent syncretism certain plastic artists adopt as an operational matrix for incorporating discourse strategies relying on local references and needs.<sup>84</sup>

As the E.P.S. Huayco workshop itself would have done, as implied by the assumption of the indigenous word as the collective's name,<sup>85</sup> all the way to their cultural cannibalism and recycling that led its members to dig in the Dante-esque rubbish tips of Lima searching for modern works of art that are, unusually, modern and rooted in the past at the same time. An archaeology of contemporariness where finding the pieces is just as important as the vital process of their elaboration and the procedures that go back to the material culture of appropriation and DIY, the 'blending' itself, in the district and in history.

This is how the group perceived it – and above all Mariotti, its most experienced member, who after the experiences of Velasquism, radicalised his own proposals in diverse directions: moving, for example, his art production to the sewage outflows to make the point that these ultimate rubbish tips were the only true museum of modern or contemporary art in Peru. In one of the photographs published in full colour in his solo exhibition of 1980, the artist appears in a Hamletian gesture among the smoky hills of waste reflected by a large and unusual mirror that thus reproduces, in an 'artistic' register, the brutal hyperrealism of what a society discards and represses: those smoke columns speak of internal combustions and hidden energies pushing their way up to emerge and manifest themselves.

What that society discards, however, is also human beings. In another image, unpublished until a few years ago, Mariotti faces the camera sitting on a chair in the middle of the rubbish tip, while far to the left a ragged and perhaps demented person peers out. Above, the proverbial Lima smog makes hardly visible the hills that serve as miserable homes for the millions of migrants who are to be the leaders of a messianic Andean revolution in sexual and political terms, according to Leoncio Bueno's poems, collated in the catalogue of the exhibition.

'We are the large microbes that gobble up the small microbes,' answered one of the inhabitants of the rubbish tip when asked how come he was never ill. The idea itself of – artistic – recycling acquires here another simultaneously vital and lethal sense, and the notion of subalternity is seriously tested by that of a radical alterity.

### *'There's room at the back'*

An alterity that is to be confronted, processed, productivised. That fragile photograph is long-lasting as an exceptional document of that basic pulse. And its rescue, in 1983, from the ruins of the extinct E.P.S. Huayco workshop could now be perceived as a harbinger of an alternative museality that since then I have been postulating, under

84 On 'achorado' pop, see Buntinx, 2005a, pp. 79–86.

85 'Huayco' is the Quechua term that alludes to the avalanches that impetuously rush down from the heights to the lowlands – Lima, for example – with a regenerative violence that fertilises the land at the same time as it devastates it. The link sought with the experience of massive migrations from the country to the capital is obvious. See Buntinx, 2005a in relation to this.

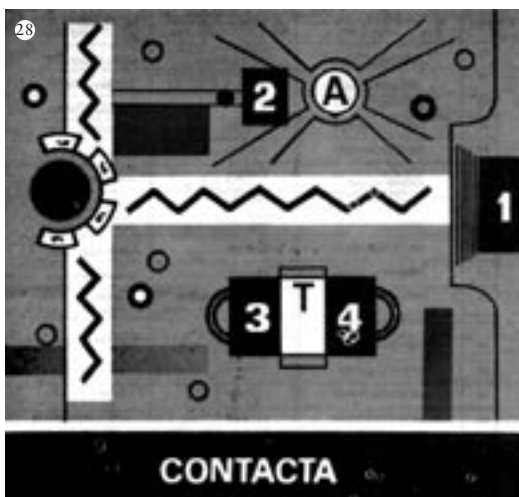


fig. 27 Emilio Hernández Saavedra, *Museo de arte borrado*, 1970, offset on paper, published in Hernández Saavedra, 1970, MICROMUSEO ('al fondo hay sitio.')

fig. 28 Official map of the distribution of activities for the first edition of *Contacta*, 1971, offset on paper, 16.5 x 11 cm, MICROMUSEO ('al fondo hay sitio.')

different names and along with different people (mainly Susana Torres).<sup>86</sup> A critical institutionalism where it would be possible to bet on and contribute to that distinct (post)modernity – ‘popular’, ‘Andean’, ‘half-blood’ – that has been the motivating and sustaining element of many of the most suggestive elements of Peruvian cultural production.

With time this proposal became more diverse, to include also other senses and processes. Several of its initial motivations, however, were registered in a conference in May 1986 during the First Encounter of Peruvian Museums, in which the theoretical presentation was formalised of what at that time I called Alternative Museum, associated with the SUR Association.<sup>87</sup> In November of that year the opening exhibition was unveiled: a reflexive review of *Amauta* magazine, with special emphasis on the relationship between modernity, Andeanism and popular manifestations arising from this seminal publication, founded and directed by Carlos Mariátegui during the late 1920s.<sup>88</sup>

The subject was particularly pertinent for a proposal for a museum of the imperatives of mobility. Social and cultural: during the next two years, the exhibition circulated both in established institutional spaces in Lima’s Historic Centre (the Pancho Fierro gallery of the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima, the Museum of Popular Art of the Riva-Agüero Institute) and some of the popular suburbs of the city (Vitarte, Villa El Salvador).

The exhibition outlines the premises and promises of the MICROMUSEO, a name that appeared later, whose meaning can be summed up in its theme and legend: ‘there’s room at the back’, the well-known litany with which the so-called ‘llenadores’ (fillers) of the public transport system justify picking up more passengers than are allowed according to the rules of the road – and the laws of physics themselves – as they cry out ‘lleva, lleva’.

At least in cultural terms, there is indeed room at the back. From its very name, this project announces itself to be malleable and mobile, ready to uphold its autonomy on a basic but sufficient budget, independent of the powers that be and of Power. Like an urban micro-bus: the prefix that defines this MICROMUSEO must be understood not only in its necessary claim of being small, immediate and accessible (*small is beautiful*), but also its allegorical allusion to the daily instrument of mobility and mobilisation of citizens.

All of this, however, with an element that is also a parody of the so-called ‘combi-capitalism’ under the kinetic slogan with which Alberto Fujimori and Vladimiro Montesinos’s dictatorship attempted to justify itself while justifying the most extreme economic informality. A politics somatised by a system of public transport that was drastically unregulated, to include as micro-entrepreneurs the thousands of civil servants who had lost their jobs, and whose vehicles, cast-offs from other countries, transformed Lima into a paradigm of urban contamination and road chaos.

Reactionary populisms that MICROMUSEO attempts to subvert, proposing a sense of

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86 In Buntinx, 2005a, I detail the circumstances that led me to this find. The photograph was first published in issue n. 0 of the magazine *Micromuseo* (Buntinx, 2001).

Among the many people and entities that contributed to this project I wish to point out the early encouragement of historian Alberto Flores Galindo (†) and the SUR association, Casa de Estudios del Socialismo.

87 The text had been drawn up in 1985. An abridged version of the document was published in Buntinx, 1989. The complete version can be found in Buntinx, 2001, pp. 3-13.

88 Buntinx, 1986.

(29)



fig. 29 E.P.S. Huayco (Mariela Zevallos), *¡Bajan en el Museo de Arte Moderno!*, 1980, silk-screen print on paper, 69.5 x 100 cm, private collection, Lima.

autonomy different from that in circulation. Capitalising, for example, on the popular strategies of reciprocity and itinerancy to slowly construct an important collection of contemporary critical art, as well as other manifestations of our most intense material culture. Also to organise a well-nourished file on the subject, produce a significant sequence of exhibitions, motivate some publications, and, above all, foster practices of critical intervention from social semiosystems.

In this vein, MICROMUSEO does not plan to limit itself to treasuring and exhibiting collections, although the organisation of exhibits and the collection of works form part of its goal. This museum not only collects objects: it makes them circulate. It does not consecrate or sanctify them: it sets them in a context. It does not have a single location: it travels and distributes according to the characteristics of each its activities, making use for this reason of spaces that are unusual or under-utilised. Tombs, cabarets, ruined palaces, as well as some of the best galleries of the media, sporadically intervened for temporary projects.

The public, won over in this way to a concept of alternative practices of culture, is as variable as it is complex, depending on the nature of each activity undertaken. MICROMUSEO works for a policy of multiple inscriptions that also answer the need to accumulate starting capital. A symbolic capital, whose privileged materialisation is not to be found in the object or the collection or the physical space, but rather in the critical project articulated by each of these elements, even in anticipation of their respective existences. The museum before the museum.

The critical project and its community vocation. Although conscious of transnational developments, MICROMUSEO does not hold out for a universal role: it aspires to be specific, in the hope of thus being able to be a pertinent and living institution.

Its frontiers are not global but 'glocal', to use a relevant term for discussions such as the one we are having. Its original fantasy is that of a museum on wheels, a moving museum, without directors or administrators but with chauffeurs, conductors, 'palancas', routers, mechanics; with official stops and other clandestine ones. With formal units and other 'pirate' ones. With the flexibility to break the rules granted by licence of artistic manipulation that does not acknowledge pre-established rules for cultural traffic – modifying the first-world models that inform them, subverting these into transnational strategies of cultural subversion. From what is appropriate to what is (in)appropriate, from cosmopolitan pop to *achorado* pop, from deconstruction to reconstruction.

By means of a strong iconic confrontation, such as this temporarily designed logo for MICROMUSEO, overlaying distinctive elements of the religious image of Sarita Colonia (the mystic face of migration) and the totemic lions that are usually painted breaking chains above the mudguards of mass-transport vehicles.

A moving museum, a museum on wheels, conceived not to communicate relationships of power among the elite groups of the city centre and the outskirts, but to serve as a vehicle for new, unique communities of the senses, of feelings. Mobile units whose deliberate blending of the most varied passengers suggests a museality that is half-blood, in which the words 'artist' and 'craftsman' will be replaced by 'maker', thus trying to imply the crisis of this and other distinctions in a culture that is growing out of impurity and contamination.

A promiscuous museality in which so-called artistic works co-exist with their erudite references and at the same time with mass-manufactured products or recycled objects



fig. 30 Francisco Mariotti searching for materials for his recycle projects in the rubbish tips of Lima 1980, analogic photograph on paper, Guillermo Orbegoso, collection Francisco Mariotti.

fig. 31 Francisco Mariotti searching for material for his recycle projects in the rubbish tips of Lima, ca. 1980, analogic photograph on paper, Juan Javier Salazar, MICROMUSEO ('al fondo hay sitio.')





from industrial sources, besides notable examples of multiple popular creativity – including religious paraphernalia and those rustic rifles known as ‘hechizas’, which played a decisive role in the violence that redefines contemporary Peru. Decisive remnants, yet precarious ones that reveal our most recent cultural experience.

All articulated from a theory of value that moves towards the concept of *value-ability*, the capacity to combine and blend each piece as one of its main attributes. An endless play of free associations to liberate the repressed potential of the senses in objects thus defamiliarised and returned to their disquieting strangeness, their sometimes sinister condition. Also in an ideological sense, as Nelly Richard has proposed in some statements, strengthening the politics of meaning with the poetics of the objects in themselves and claiming in each gesture, I add, contradiction and complexity.

The wide and complex set thus formed, offers endless possibilities for alternative meaning constructions, in tune with our senses, our sensorial times. Exchanges of fluids where the subaltern occupies a new place, no longer as an imaginary representation but rather an irruption, a breakthrough of fact into the discourse, the artistic intercourse.

It is a matter, as Richard suggests quite properly, of making it possible for the identity to become different and the difference become alterity. Constituting ourselves as distinguishing difference: a theoretical proposal that MICROMUSEO has in fact been operating by means of a museum practice that juxtaposes disparate fragments of our many expressions that are jointly illuminated by their differences as well as their articulations. Frictionary strategies that place on the critical scene the discontinuous nature of history, culture and politics in a society formed by fractures: a country that is not a country, let alone a nation, but rather an archipelago of dislocated temporalities that roughly overlap. And an unimaginable community in which no present cancels all the unresolved pasts that swamp us. Or their symbolic inertias.

The idea is to capitalise even on the endless failures, transforming them into experiences by activating as memory the remnants of our history, so often broken. Fragments that wish to be registered in a continuum, always interrupted yet always rebuilt. The museum conceived not as a development of modern economy but rather as a critical agent of new citizenship. And as an alternative and particular sense of (post)modernity. Yet the peculiarities of this agenda do not prevent its articulations from other needs. The material and ideological funds of MICROMUSEO also constitute a historic reservoir, preserving and making available objects, documents and concepts that otherwise in many cases would have disappeared, in spite of their relevance.<sup>89</sup>

Thus the role assumed is also that of a catalyst of the scenario, that makes alliances with other people and institutions depending on specific projects. MICROMUSEO is not an end in itself, but rather a medium. It is offered as part of a larger project, linked to our precarious reality and the efforts to understand it by transforming it.<sup>90</sup>

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89 Even categories such as ‘empty museality’ and ‘critical art’, that are now becoming general in the media, are inscribed in local discourse ever since their persistent use by formulations of MICROMUSEO.

90 It is, for this reason, with hope that MICROMUSEO perceives the renovation that in recent years has been transforming the traditional Museo de Arte de Lima (MALI) into an indispensable landmark, too, for matters relative to current productions. On the other hand, the project, which is different from the self-titled Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (MAC), frustrated on so many occasions, is now attempting to reinvent itself. Thus additional responses take place regarding our lack of a museum in this area.



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fig. 32 Cover of the brochure that was part of the exhibition of *Amauta 1926-1930*, Lima, SUR, 1986.

## Microhistory

This original commitment to the transformative power of cultural praxis is a founding brand for MICROMUSEO. This is made obvious by the different initiatives that, after the precedents stated earlier on, would link those responsible for it with exhibitions, performances and critical interventions that allude to multiple intensities of those convulsive times: hyperinflation, popular religious manifestations, international wars, our own violence. After the self-inflicted military coup of 1992, the idea of an alternative museality acquired renewed validity with some proposals of 1995 and, above all, since the rites and actions that in 1997 consolidated relations between those within the project and the wider artistic environment.

It was at this time that the name of MICROMUSEO was adopted, assuming also in practical terms the more recreational connotations of the image of the urban microbus. A vehicle that even manages to be designed as an additional headquarters for this different type of museum, this mobile MICROMUSEO including micro-tours that can articulate, in a single, roving view, the sophisticated modernisation of the elegant city with the syncretic popular (post)modernity of the gigantic street markets in the outskirts. Or associate new commercial technologies with the big-brush painting of the more densely populated avenues. Or point out already existing overlaps of centric eccentricities such as the Embassy cabaret, transformed these days into a Folk Cultural Theatre with no changes at all in its decor, which remains brothelesque – let alone its English name. When organising an incursion of makers in this atmosphere of unusual intersections, MICROMUSEO urged the Centre of Scenic Arts of the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima to house in this same space Mexican performance artist Astrid Hadad, in an important additional instance of the recomposition of certain local critical scenes (the initiative of Karin Elmore, director of the CAE, was decisive on this point). It all happened at the beginning of 1999, and during the following months MICROMUSEO also fostered a sequence of additional interventions in unusual places: exorcising the energies captured in the simulated pre-Hispanic temple that serves as a mausoleum of the embalmed body of the founder of the main archaeological museum of the country (Julio C. Tello); or updating the historic connotations of the Casa Museo José Carlos Mariátegui, founder of modern Peruvian socialism.

In the first of these spaces *Sarita iluminada* was staged, a ‘conference-performance-legend-rite-pago-pagapu’<sup>91</sup> based on the sexual and political subtexts of the evolution of the religious image of Sarita Colonia, doubtlessly the most relevant cult figure associated with the experience of popular (post)modernity. The second venue hosted a disturbing performance by Piero Busts called *¿Por qué sí vivo en el Perú?* (Why do I live in Peru?) and three large installations in which Fernando Bryce exhibited the large critique of his so-called ‘Hawaii Museum’ for the first time and the mimetic analysis method that became so famous later on.<sup>92</sup>

Sharing the higher risks with around twenty creators, towards the end of that same year MICROMUSEO decided to give new, contemporary meaning to the ruins of a colo-

91 ‘Pago-pagapu’ is a popular Andean expression for certain magic-religious offering rituals.

92 All of this within the context of the presentation of issue no. 16 of the magazine *Márgenes*, whose central text analysed the testimonies of Peruvian intellectuals and creators living abroad (“¿Por qué no vivo en el Perú?”). Bryce had participated in this publication with an extensive mosaic of incisive images (Buntinx, 1998).



33 Temporary logo of MICROMUSEO, designed by Susana Torres and Eliott Urcuhuaranga. 2004.

nial mansion located in front of the Convent of Saint Francis, near the main centres of political and religious power. With two thousand dollars collected from the exhibitors and the curator himself, these ruins were reconstructed to exalt the works then collected under a polysemic title *Emergencia artística. Arte crítico 1998-1999* (Artistic Emergency. Critical Art 1998-1999). It was a 'self-managed exhibition' conceived as a parallel – not in opposition – to the Iberoamerican Biennial of Lima, which immediately became an important reference for cultural discussion and the symbolic resistance against Fujimori and Montesinos' perpetuation in power.<sup>93</sup>

The public attendance was extraordinary and the media coverage impressive. Partly, in fact, due to the wider background of the times – a critical moment in which fears were confronted by the search for multiple freedoms. To this expectant feeling, initiatives such as *Artistic emergency* contributed with new spaces for exchanges that would later encourage civilians overwhelmingly from the art scene into a public setting. A cultural dethronement of a dictatorship.<sup>94</sup>

At the end of this event, towards mid-2001, MICROMUSEO gave way to a historic revision of the era by means of a retrospective of the flag-bundles in Eduardo Tokeshi's work, one of the most eloquent productions on the processes of contemporary violence in Peru.<sup>95</sup>

Housed in the Fórum gallery, this exhibition was one of the several formal exhibitions that, in recent years, have enabled MICROMUSEO to propose insistently the radical opening-up of our artistic perspectives. This was achieved by collecting, in 2005, for example, under the title of *Yo no me llamo Juanita* (My name is not Juanita), a complex sequence of artistic commentaries on exhibitionistic mistreatment of ancestral bodies in certain improper practices of archaeology and museography.<sup>96</sup> And by exploring in 2003 the diverse meaning of the extraordinary and ignored – or rejected – work by Luis Cueva Manchego, an ex-convict and popular character better known as Lu.Cu.Ma (the title of the exhibit – *Del puñal al pincel*, in English, 'from the dagger to the brush', underlines his life theme).<sup>97</sup>

Both proposals were exhibited in the Luís Miró Quesada Garland room of the Town Hall of Miraflores, where in 2004 MICROMUSEO also staged the exhibition *Neón-colonial. The afiche chicha en el arte*. (Colonial neon. The Chicha Poster in Art): a complete collection of the important graphic production that since 1992 has linked cultivated Peruvian artists with vernacular silk-screen artists from the aesthetics of popular (post)modernity.

Beyond the – visual and cultural – impact of these posters it is possible to perceive

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93 Buntinx, 1999. The title comes from a book that I have not finished yet about 'poetic emergencies' of the last two decades of the 20th century. As curator of that exhibition, I placed a special emphasis on pieces that had suffered various types of censorship or that suggested ethics and aesthetics confronting the repressive atmosphere imposed at that time by the regime. In view of the difficulty in obtaining backing for a project of that nature, MICROMUSEO organised a co-operative system in which the creators and the curator shared the costs as well as the practical tasks of the project.

The space was made available by the Journalist School of Lima, shouldering the risks this gesture entailed. Contact with that body was achieved thanks to Emilio Santisteban, who also participated with an 'action-installation' – *Crisis* – with enormous repercussions, originally conceived to be presented in the Lima Iberoamerican Biennial. This possibility was frustrated by the cancellation of one of the headquarters of the Biennial due to pressure from the dictatorship.

94 Buntinx, 2006a [2001].

95 Buntinx, 2001b.

96 Buntinx, 2005b.

97 Buntinx, 2003b.



fig. 34 Temporary logo of MICROMUSEO, designed by Gustavo Buntinx, Susana Torres and Eliott Urcuhuaranga, 2006.



fig. 35 'Hechiza' rifle manufactured in 1989 by Ayacuchan communeer Víctor Tomaylla Quispe. In 1990 its owner, Gregorio Gallardo Sauñi was killed by stoning by Sendero Luminoso before he had a chance to use this improvised weapon. The documents exhibited in the same showcase correspond to the manuscript and transcription of the witnessing of the events that took place in the area of Quinua by Alfredo Fernández. (Photograph; Carmen Reátegui).

a genuine result of the creative friction between enlightened petit-bourgeois and the popular emerging elements among which MICROMUSEO finds itself. A social sense as well of alterity, itinerancy.

New transitions towards the gestation of rituals that in a beneficial way confound art with the sweaty social life of our growing megalopolis: Lima, the horrible and magnificent city, destined to metabolise cultural processes of the entire continent right from the moment they are perceived as the only (post)modernities that are important, which – as already stated – are those that do not repress but rather productivise difference. It is a matter of backing, as shouted in silence by one of the banners raised during the above-mentioned performance of Bustos, ‘the rising blend of possibilities’. Like the pioneer poster with which in 1992 the first version of *Sarita iluminada* was announced. A foundational poster, not only because of its full articulation of the aesthetics known as ‘chicha’ but rather because it was designed and produced and exhibited in the most diverse streets of Lima, thanks to the collaboration of the direct creators of this radiant and triumphant new vulgarity.

Or as in crossroads and alternatives that MICROMUSEO favours in ‘erudite’ paintings by Christian Bendayán and mystic or publicity paintings by Lu.Cu. Ma.: Luis Cueva Manchego, also known as ‘the Chacalón of Peruvian painting’ because of his physical and emotional resemblance to the late star of popular techno-cumbia rhythms.

Lu.Cu.Ma. may represent the most extreme figure of Peruvian art, as marginal as he is representative: ‘a criminal and offender’ (this is how his own paintings are announced), rescued from prison and the psychiatric ward by mystic devotion and ambulatory pictorial practice. In the Amazon streets of Iquitos or Pucallpa he offers his services as a jobbing illustrator, alternating commercial signs and disco murals with hallucinated icons, autobiographical tales and religious images of extraordinary intensity. Devotions, crimes and punishments, but also some of the most conflicting and contradictory political representations. Works of all types, including marks of sexuality and violence that Bendayán reproduces and makes extreme in a self-portrait that moves towards a pictorial tribute of Lu.Cu.Ma.

This large triptych could well serve as the pictorial element placed at the abyss of a museum proposal, which, in its collections, publications and settings, always seeks the unsuitability of difference rather than its radicalism. As in the case of this painting, whose pictorial references dig into a primary/primordial sense of the figure and plastic matter. Yet the variety of popular techniques thus attempted open out around a pure, clean oil painting of Lu.Cu.Ma. himself, exhibited in his copious body-art, a plethora of slashes and tattoos no less archetypal for their seeming vulgarity. The most traditional and academic of plastic speeches delivered to the exaltation of the most elementary inscriptions. These are also the most essential ones. The beer that Lu.Cu. Ma. brings to his lips with a smile strikes a contrast with the brushes held in his left hand (left), which also reveals the pictorial stains of his trade. This could well be the definite detail of the work and museality that upholds it: the necessarily and joyfully dirty hands of painting, art, in a society whose cultural foreground is impurity and contamination. The new beauty that will emerge from all that.



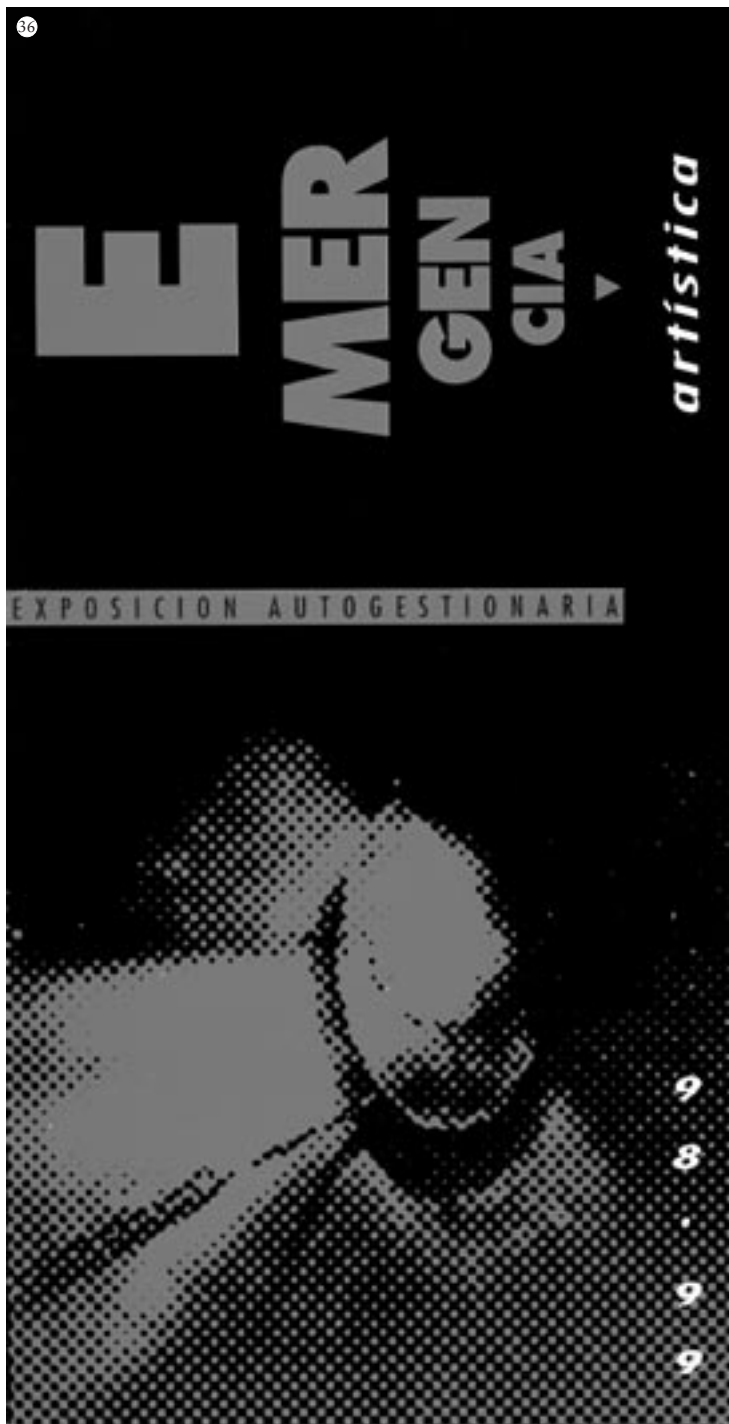


fig. 36, 37 Title page and credits of the catalogue of the exhibition *Emergencia artística. Arte crítico 1998-1999* (Buntinx 1999).

GEN  
ER  
CIA

**SEGUNDA EDICIÓN**  
CORREGIDA Y AUMENTADA

**PARTICIPANTES**

José Alemán  
Félix Álvarez  
Alex Ángeles  
Christian Bendayán  
Claudia Coca  
Chio Flores  
Miguel García  
Patsy Higuchi  
Natalia Iguíñiz / Sandro Ventura  
Carlos León Jiménez  
Gilda Mantilla  
Alfredo Márquez  
Gautier Migliori  
Perufábrica (colectivo taller)  
Victor Prieto  
Emilio Santisteban  
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**Agradecimiento especial**

Colegio de Periodistas de Lima

*Construction is not building (coda)*

*Small is beautiful* must be understood in Peru also as *small is viable*: with hardly any budget or salaries, MICROMUSEO has been carrying out a task in preservation, research and promotion of our critical culture. Also, I hope, the recovery of citizens' self-esteem, and what at times I have called 'the empowerment of localness'.<sup>98</sup>

Achievements that are still not enough, but at the same time that could be productivised by other initiatives; proposals with better financing yet at times burdened by an obsession, a real-estate fixation that unnecessarily exhausts its energies and resources. With the risk also of creating a new instance of that tragic national metaphor that Gonzalo Portocarrero and Patricia Oliart were able to perceive in the always unfinished buildings of our impoverished public schools: premature ruins of something that has never been finished.<sup>99</sup>

The problem is to be found in perceiving the museum void as a strictly museographical lack, instead of a complex museological challenge. As opposed to what we usually believe among ourselves, a museum is not a building but – in essence – a collection and a critical project. Not a *place* but rather a *space*: social, cultural, civic. Political in the best sense of the word. There is a certain vulgar materialism in the opposite logic, which after the crucial and dense idea of the infrastructure, just comes to perceive a physical ground, mainly conceived also as a container for the moving tours of Euro-North American exhibitions. A didactic demonstration of what Justo Pastor Mellado qualifies as 'service curatorship': a curatorship that is designed to function for the reproduction on the fringes of the globalising museality of the cosmopolitan system.<sup>100</sup> As opposed to that mimetic practice, Mellado proposes the independent attitude of the 'curator as builder of the infrastructure' in a complex concept that imbues this category with critical notions of history, art, collectionism, filing. And museality itself. And, inevitably, social elements rising through its elaborations of meaning.

These themes are all inscribed in the projection of the factual presence of the museum itself, its *materiality*, understood in layman's language. 'The fact of deciding on the construction of a museum in our region is an intervention in the work of history', Mellado defines with precision. 'It usually happens that constructing a museum is mistaken for building a museum. The constructability has a direct relationship with the exhibition of the process of conversion of its concept, into a support for interpretation of history. In this sense it is very likely that museums will be built, but without being constructed, nor being constructed in the educational sense of the word.'

This deficient constructability would be prized in projects such as those of the Museum of Contemporary Art in the Barranco district of Lima. And it could continue to be so even if its last efforts at materialising a container are finally successful: as should already be obvious, it is not building a headquarters that will solve the Peruvian lack of museums. Constructing is not edifying.

Thus it is undisputable that, even with these misgivings, an effectively active conventional institutionalism could also fulfil useful and necessary tasks. To be genuinely contemporary, however, a museum must also harbour fantasies of fulfilling the stated promise of the insolent engraving of E.P.S. Huayco: linking medium and intellectual

98 Buntinx, 2006b.

99 Portocarrero and Oliart, 1989.

100 Mellado, 2001.

sectors with the wide-ranging categories of popularity and subalternity that today redefine the meaning itself of living in a new megalopolis such as Lima, perhaps the most important cultural laboratory of the extreme fringe areas of Latin America. Here it is not a matter of questioning one or another museum initiative: all will be welcome in the desert of our impoverished scene. More than this, there is an aspiration to enhance them by friction with the different libido of a different type of radicality, open to acknowledgement and the installation of critiques understood to be crucial for any undertaking of this type.

*Criticism*, the critical and transformative project of our history of art. And our history itself. In the inevitable movements from one category to another, the image of a micro-bus is offered once again as one of the cultural figures par excellence of our promiscuous and hovel-like times. Times made of scrap metal but moving ahead.

*Lleva, lleva.*

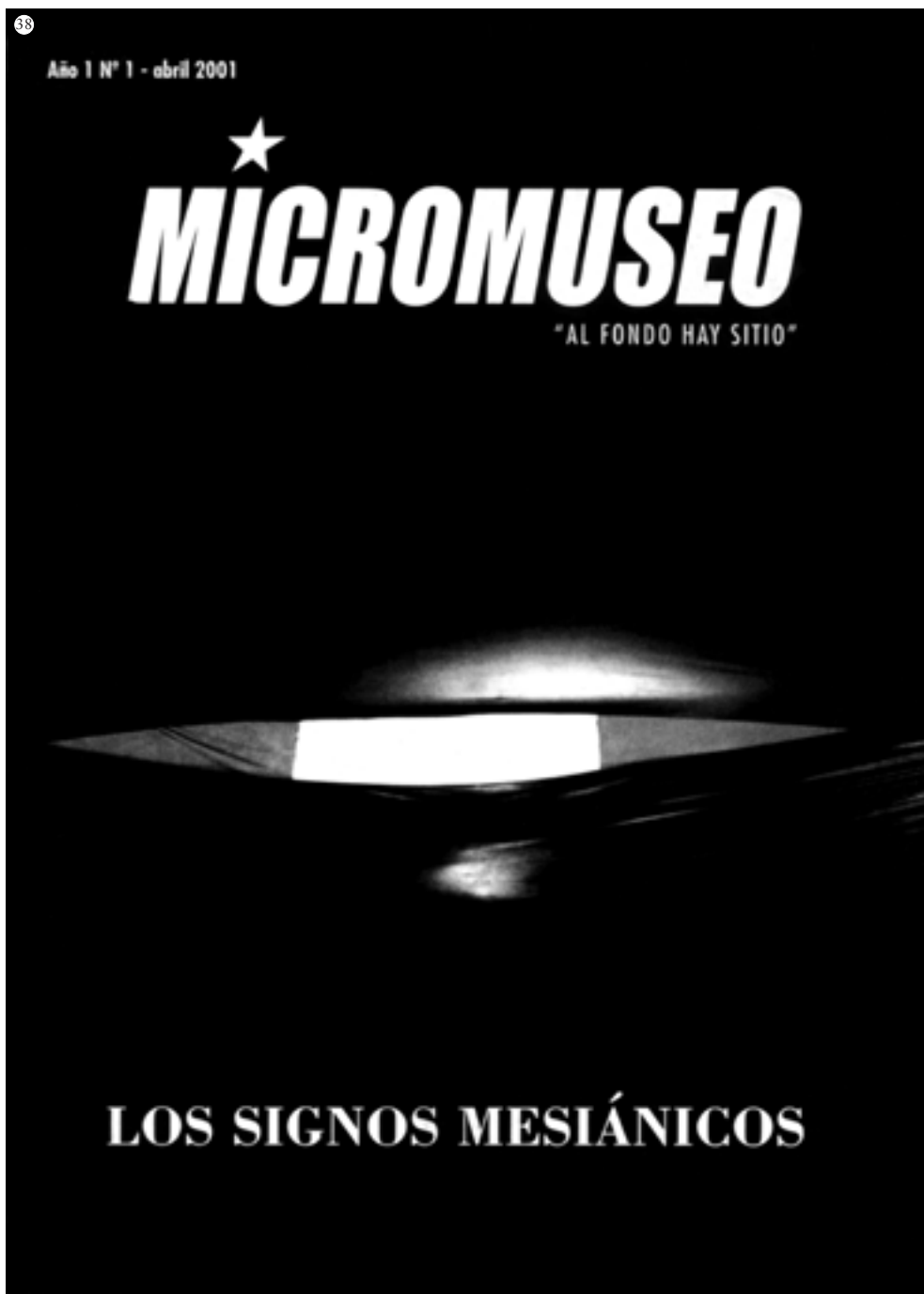


fig. 38 Title page of the catalogue of the exhibition *Los signos mesiánicos* (Buntinx 2001b).



# YO NO ME LLAMO JUANITA

MICROMUSEO PRODUCTIONS  
("AL PANDO HAY SIDA")



fig. 39 Title page of the catalogue of the exhibition *Yo no me llamo Juanita* (Buntinx 2005b).

40



fig. 40 Lu.Cu.Ma. (Luis Cueva Manchego) and Christian Bendayán. *Del puñal al pincel*, 2003, silk-screen print on paper, 61.3 x 86.5 cm, Impresión Visual Urcuhuaranga S.A. (VIUSA), MICROMUSEO ('al fondo hay sitio.')



(41)



fig. 41 Gustavo Buntinx and Susana Torres, *Neón-colonial*, 2004, silk-screen print on paper, 61.3 x 86.5 cm, Impresión Visual Urcuhuaranga S.A. (VIUSA), MICROMUSEO ('al fondo hay sitio.')

42



fig. 42 Registration of the performance titled *¿Por qué sí vivo en el Perú?*, carried out by Piero Bustos in the presentation of issue n. 16 of the magazine called *Márgenes*, organised by MICROMUSEO and SUR in Casa Museo José Carlos Mariátegui, Lima, 1999. (Susana Torres as a participant).

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fig. 43 Gustavo Buntinx and Susana Torres, *Sarita iluminada*, 1992, silk-screen print on paper, 56 x 81.5 cm, printed by Feliciano Mallqui, MICROMUSEO ('al fondo hay sitio.')



fig. 44 Christian Bendayán, *Crucifixión (Por qué me has abandonado)*, 1999, oil on canvas, 140 x 190 cm, private collection.

fig. 45 Lu.Cu.Ma. (Luis Cueva Manchego), *Del puñal al pincel*, ¿2002?, synthetic enamel on canvas, 87 x 150 cm approx. (slightly irregular format), MICROMUSEO ('al fondo hay sitio.')

fig. 46 Lu.Cu.Ma. (Luis Cueva Manchego), *Chacalón en el cielo*, prior to 2001, synthetic enamel on triplay, 120.5 x 80 cm approx. (slightly irregular format), MICROMUSEO ('al fondo hay sitio.')







fig. 47 Christian Bendayán, *El pintor Luis Cueva Manchego, Lu.Cu.Ma.*, 2000, oil and synthetic enamel on canvas, triptych, central panel: 160 x 150 cm, side panels: 160 x 75 cm each, MICROMUSEO ('al fondo hay sitio.')





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**Teresa Velázquez** I would like to ask you, John, if the practices that Ana Longoni has alluded to are perhaps the most adequate way to represent subalternity, in the sense that they themselves are taking part in the action itself?

**John Beverley** I believe that all the speakers here, not only Ana, point towards something that is emerging and is difficult to conceptualise within the logic we have been trained in, as it involves another will in creation. I believe that perhaps the most interesting model that is suggested at the end, in the Argentinean practices and in the MICROMUSEO, is the possibility of a sort of alliance, a sort of popular front, I'd say, because I come from the traditional left wing, of heterogeneous subjects, yet preserving their heterogeneity. For me, this is the genius of the popular front, diverse, as opposed to viewing the proletariat as a single subject of history: it includes women, ethnic groups, democratic capitalists (what is that? Thus they are also there in the discourse of the popular front). It is the model of a politics of alliances which is at stake. The question is what would the artistic, even the museistic, version of this policy of alliances be like. It is a politics based on transformation of society and, in this sense, I would like to debate the problem of Communism, because here we are all social democrats, I am a democrat and voted for the democrats, but we want more, right? Social democracy is okay, but in Chile, it is enough to replace the dictatorship but there should be more, and this is our own desire. Yet to reach this extra, the thing is to respect the wishes and wills of the others in alliance with us. If not, it can be a project fundamentally based on our sole experience, and it must be a shared proposal, in which our position is radically off-centre.

**Audience** Good afternoon. I take advantage of the fact that there are many Latin Americans participating in today's debate to reflect very briefly on another case, which is that of the still extant dictatorships, such as Cuba. I call to your attention the fact that in Cuba there is a museum, but it is a National Museum of Beaux Arts, which still goes by that name, where there was recently a restoration and plenty of works were brought to light that had been hidden for a long time, because it was ideologically convenient for the regime. In this case I am going to mention an example in contemporary art which is really causing havoc in this apparently interminable dictatorship, but which we hope will end soon.

I link this idea with the manipulation of the subject that also occurs in circumstances of subalternity. I want to mention two specific cases a Cuban artist living in Barcelona, Juan Pablo Ballester, considers in the exhibition titled *Atravesados*, which took place in Spain several years ago. Juan Pablo mentioned the cases of Ana Mendieta and Ernesto Puyol. Both were artists who lived and still live outside Cuba as a consequence of the *Peter Pan* operation at the start of the regime, in which many parents sent their offspring to the United States because they feared they would otherwise lose their parental rights. These are artists who grew up with the split-identity implicit in having to leave Cuba and live abroad, in the different context of physical residence elsewhere. They are artists who are today recognised by the regime, but only as victims of this historic operation and also in their position as subalterns, or lateral subjectives (in the case of Ana because of her feminist message, in that of Ernesto because of his homosexual one). These are artists for whom perhaps these conditions are important, but also important is their being immigrants, people who reflect on a problem of immi-

gration yet at the same time hold an ideological principle the regime is not interested in. The question, or reflection, I pose in this context is that we should not just think of ourselves and how our museums are structured, but rather of what ethnic international function we have opposed to other equivalents, be they museologists or cultural bureaucrats who continually come here and discuss other realities. Contemporary Cuban art is an art that is hardly represented within Cuba. The symbolic capital it generates is outside the borders of the island. And at the same, time we constantly see how Spain welcomes these policers or mercenaries of culture who come here to make their speeches and show their version of what they consider Cuban contemporary art to be. I ask how can we be talking about ethics in other spheres, about defending human rights in other circles, and not also think about culture and in this case, contemporary art, or the importance of contemporary art in mirroring reality and the history it builds, yet remains excluded from the debate when these cultural policemen are invited – who, to top it all, get paid, thus strengthening the patrimony and advantage of a totalitarian regime such as the Cuban one.

**Gustavo Buntinx** Let us not fool ourselves; everyone gets paid. Even we are going to be paid, or at least I hope so... However this does not illegitimise the meaning of what has just been said. The problem is how to take on board the density of these very complex situations with a passion that does not turn into uncontrolled rage. I don't know the internal details of cultural management of the Cuban regime, so I can't offer an authoritative opinion, but your question brings us to another aspect of what has been said at this table, in Beverly's talk, which I think worthy of discussion. I believe that Beverly's intervention was not only magisterially expounded and suitably timed, but also loaded with important considerations and innovations. Yet there was, overridingly towards the end a problematic vindication of original Communism in a certain usage which, in my opinion, is difficult to maintain, although Beverley explained more about that when the discussion session opened. How do you restore the utopian dimension of the worst nightmare of the 20th century? Is it possible to go back to the promises of the Paris Commune, which is what Beverley was saying, after the massacre of Kronstadt, the Stalin gulags, the genocide of Cambodia, the historic cruelty of 50 years of Cuban revolution that end in a dynastic succession in the worst feudal 'caudillo' style? Was it for this sort of succession that so much blood was shed and the political libido was stimulated for so many decades? I ask myself. Not to mention so many other tragedies. For this reason I would like to tell Beverley that it is better to think it over, radically and in a *Marxist way*, because the basic heart of Marxism is that the praxis is the criterion of truth on the theory, and this seriously forces us to reconsider the whole idea of Communism, and also our choice of terms. I understand that we come here claiming a utopian dimension, which I fully adhere to, but to balance that desire or illusion, whichever you prefer, with terminology that is so historically branded is counterproductive to the very purpose claimed for it. Whispering with Paulo Herkenhoff on the matter, he uttered a decisive phrase: there is a deficit in social thinking that keeps us from giving a new content, and even a new name, to the utopian dimension we have to reconstruct nonetheless.

**John Beverley** Well, it is perhaps a difference. My wife told me that I had made a mistake in using that word. She is a democrat and I am a Communist-democrat, but I

am a democrat of the democratic party, I vote democrat. Look, I know that it is provocative. I perfectly understand the situation of Cuba, but I believe it is rather more complicated than suggested. I would point out, for example, the Cuban rap phenomenon: how it emerges, how it confronts the regime, a rap springing from the black neighbourhoods, but which is finally granted a space, and not by accident gives rise to an artistic practice that grows from groups of black proletarians. It is very complicated and I am not going to enter into an argument. The question is more about why I use the word Communism. I attempted to make a distinction between Communism in the historic sense, those parties to which some of us belonged and others did not (I did not, I was always a socialist), and those regimes that some now view with nostalgia. For me there is a question of whether the situation in the former Soviet Union is better now than it was before. My answer is no, it was better in the past. But why do I use the word Communism? Because for me it represents the insistence on the existence of an egalitarian society. What does equality mean? Is it possible that there have ever been egalitarian societies, or are we condemned for ever to live in societies essentially defined by hierarchical levels, where our own lives are defined because they are hierarchical and put other people on different levels of status? Is another type of society possible? Communism seems to me a good way of naming it. Not, of course, alluding to the Soviet Union, which to me was a hierarchical society, and typically modern. If there is a failing in the discourse of modernity it is above all the Soviet Union (as Lacan stated very well in a discussion with students in 1968: *the Soviet Union was a dictatorship of the university*). And true, in a certain sense, my critique is against the university and institutional thinking that wishes to impose itself on the population, imposing on the citizens [their view of] how things should be. But this is not why I cannot abandon the idea, because it represents dissatisfaction with the present, with the social-democrat presence, because we want more, and what is this more that we are striving for? Where are we going? What do we need to develop? What would a society be like that is not defined by subalternity relations, repression, hierarchisation, etc.? We have to have a concept of this possibility and the hope that it can be possible, haven't we? I am same age as Don Quixote, and when I speak I feel I am a bit of a charlatan, but this is what I think and that is why I use the word Communism and I insist – you may agree or not, like Gustavo, but I insist – one cannot separate the problems of social inequality and subalternity without considering the possibility of Communism. Now, how it is defined is another matter. Obviously it is not what it used to be, not what was called Communism. But there was something there that could be part of it. I don't believe it was all simply a lot of shit. Was it shit, all of it? No, I don't think so; that is too damning a verdict for me.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** I believe we need to return to very simple things in order to understand this process, and I add here that there's a difference between the theory and implementation of a political regime. Because one can say that Nazism is a fact of capitalism. Nobody mentions that it took place under the capitalist system, or that the killing of 10,000 people in Canudos in Brazil was an event of an entrenched capitalism, or that what we saw today presented by Ana was not an effort to maintain capitalism. Everything that happened in the Southern Cone in the sixties, seventies and eighties was a way of reconnecting the political paths of countries with capitalism.

**Ana Longoni** A different approach to this discussion, which has to do with a question that was being asked a while ago outside the table, is why the table of subalternity is a table of South Americans. When I was speaking to the colleague about the dictatorships that still exist, I thought that the Spanish citizens also had a dictatorship, a very long one. The exercise of memory and justice we attempt in Latin America is still a pending matter in Spain, in many senses. Then I thought: why transpose this matter of subalternity to another external, exotic, faraway place and not consider it a matter of internal subalternity? The very internalities Raymond Williams spoke of when posing the question of not thinking of central and peripheral modernity, but rather considering our own otherness within Europe.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** I'd like to mention something here: the Triple Alliance war of Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina against Paraguay (1865-70), financed by English capital, ideologised by the Jesuits and the Paraguayan aristocracy isolated in Buenos Aires. The population of Paraguay was reduced to 30%; a population of 600,000 people was reduced to 200,000 of whom only 20,000 were men. We are talking about the fact that violence, political irrationality, is not a prerogative of any one economic regime or production system.

**Teresa Velázquez** Going back to Ana's comment, very pertinent, by the way, I would agree that we also need to examine what is being done here against that resistance, subalternity, and I believe the meaning of the title of this table was not to sideline subalternity as a Latin American topic, but rather to point out the importance of that resistance, and the existence of other voices.

**Audience** For me it is very difficult to speak in Spanish... I am going to say only two things. Ana's question reminded me of another thing: before coming to Baeza we went to Granada. When we visited the Alhambra we saw, as you will know, that in various places on the walls of the palace poems are written. The translation of one of them said: *The West perceives the East*. And this also makes me think of a few questions that still exist after many centuries: not just the 20th or 19th centuries, but constant confrontations in our history. I would like to go back to Gustavo's suggestion, when he proposed praxis as opposed to theory. I believe that instead of arguing a grand political system, we should discuss museums. And then I would like to say that through praxis we can rethink or reinvent museums, and I believe that the example of the MICROMUSEO is a very interesting proposal to think about. I believe that here something was said already on the first day that for me was not confronted, which is the management and formation of the collections. We talk a lot about the contemporary presence and production in the museum, but we don't talk about the challenges of the collection. Creating a museum is very important to me, because the example of the traditional museum, which is two hundred years old, is different, for example, from that of the museum of Alexandria, which was closer to our university model and operated for 600 years. I mean that the model of a museum in our culture is very recent, dating back to barely the end of the 18th century, and could very well be reinvented. The most important thing in this model is the existence of collections and heritage: how to consider them for museums in ways and criteria to incorporate them so as to transform them into heritage, with all the workable possibilities we have for the future? I believe this is an important subject for museums to discuss.

**Gustavo Buntinx** All I attempted to say could be summed up in a statement almost at the end of the talk: a museum is not a building; a museum is a collection and a critical project. If these two factors are not taken into consideration one does not have a museum. And the problem of the emptiness of Peruvian museums lies in the real-estate obsession that has led sectors backing the project of building a museum of contemporary art to exhaust their vision, their hopes, plus the money they asked from others, in constructing a building without worrying about the construction of a history, and this implies a fundamental critical dimension and also an accumulation of symbolic value in works of art. What the essay by Justo Pastor Mellado suggests is precisely that building is not edifying. For me it is clear that finishing the perpetually ruined building of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Lima will not solve the museum emptiness of Peru. This is an issue that has to be undertaken by the constitution of a critical project and a collection. In our country this has to do with a commitment to building history and understanding contemporariness as part of a narrative and ideological pattern that is more complex. The absence of formalised collections in museums is not a random, naive or innocent product. Museum emptiness is deeply articulated around other types of emptiness.

**Suely Rolnik** No, I believe that in all the talks – not only today, but over the entire conference – there seems to be a sort of consensus that the museum is not an institution that should be questioned. But I believe there are some aspects that got distanced with the passing of time and should be stressed. First, creating a collection, producing a historical register, must first address answering the history of art with universal history and building history. Secondly, restate the idea, the very concept, of memory. I mentioned the examples of Lygia Clark and Ana, and also offered examples of other artistic practices; how, for example, the return of *Tucumán Arde* dignifies and enhances the memory of *Tucumán Arde*. Thus the role played by memory, the concept of memory, the subject of memory, how the museum can register certain types of artistic practices... implies a complete rethink of what registering implies and how history should be considered from this point of view.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** I would like to add something from the point of view of Brazil and Latin America. It is a shame that Chris Dercon is not here, because in 85-86 he mounted an exhibition of Brazilian art in the PS1 of New York which led to the discovery of Brazilian art by the New York critics and market. I believe the entire effort over the past 20 years to introduce Brazilian art and Latin American art in general adequately to the United States and Europe has resulted in something almost tragic for us, which is the loss of direct contact with our art. Gego's whole collection from his family is located in Texas, and it is being said that the Lerner collection is going to be purchased by that same museum, for \$350 million. All of Oiticica, as Suely stated, is poised to follow the same path, although it is still not known for certain. When Lygia Clark died, we collected her work (I include myself in this process); we physically collected it and made whatever was possible of it: all the objects that were not saleable were in rubbish bins. Literally, as they were not signed, they had no place in the market. We managed to find up to nine different donors. The formation of this collection was a comprehensive process. There were many people working on it; I specify the excellent work on Lygia Clark by Luiz Guilherme Vergara, because the Museo de

Arte Contemporáneo of Niterói is the best public collection in Brazil of the works of Lygia Clark, and all the educational work there is based on neoconcretist experiences: the matter of phenomenology, the matter of precariousness in Lygia's work, the matter of diversity in the work of Hélio Oiticica, and very close links with the favelas on the other side of the museum. I believe that this is not an absolute model, but it is indeed an indicator of an action that appears to be historic.

**Ana Longoni** Going back to something I attempted to formulate at the end of my lecture, it is not necessarily good or bad for these practices to enter the museum. It is, as Suely says, a matter of memory. And memory needs to be trained as a conflictive technique. Memory has to confront memories to define a sense. That there is a persistent sort of *revival of Tucumán Arde* is not necessarily bad or necessarily good. Out of the various counterposed versions a sense will arise that, we hope, will recover and reassume the political radicality of that process, not annul it. But that is, let us say, a matter presently in flux. And the histories as yet unwritten, as well as the archives, documents and contexts yet to be replaced, will contribute to resolving it. But, I repeat, this is work in progress, and the verdict is open.

**Gustavo Buntinx** At times, healthy opportunism is the best strategy. In the term 'civilian society' you alluded to, John, there was a certain clarity with respect to art's need to be able to come in and out depending on the situation of the moment, the demand. Some may consider it ironic that these days the MALBA (Museum of Latin American Art in Buenos Aires) is incorporating and exhibiting as a new acquisition in its collection the city's garbage bags with the faces of Fujimori and Montesinos printed on them that the collective *Sociedad Civil* circulated in Peru in similar actions to those that you, Ana, mentioned. It is not precisely a public museum, nor is it associated with the global proletariat cause etc., but this type of inclusion allows to be written into history a use of protected spaces of art that can be later capitalised for other purposes. Your answer, Ana, is precise. These are not morally defined permanent gestures. One wins and loses all the time. As I say, it does not matter what you do, you are going to make mistakes and you are also going to win. The thing is how you play a situation and what your capacity is to handle the circuits of power and protection that art can provide. Also, as I said earlier, circuits of censorship.

**Ute Meta Bauer** I would like to go back to what John Beverley said earlier, about not only what a museum does not represent, but also who it does not represent, and who speaks through a museum. I believe we can even go back to the earliest collections of the Louvre or MoMA, and ask ourselves when and in what circumstances each work arrived at each museum. And I believe that, to go a little deeper into the history of museums, asking under what circumstances the collection arrives is very, very interesting. Even whether the artworks change museums, change their meanings - historical works as well as contemporary ones. I believe that this is what still makes the museum so interesting, because it is a machine for producing history, it is an apparatus, a supra-structure. And I think we cannot deny this. On the other hand, what you were saying... when there is an absence in a museum the works should go to spaces, be they a museum or a collection... we should note that certain works survive because they have been in certain museums. Otherwise they could have been lost.



However, I believe there should be a constant reassessment of what is in a museum and to whom the works belong. And this ownership should not be definite. I think we need to revise this. I was once at a CIMAM conference in Barcelona and a Mexican curator asked Glenn Lowry (director of MoMA), in the discussion about modernity, if it was not high time now for MoMA to rethink its notion of modernity. And Glenn Lowry said that everyone is welcome to visit the museum, but not everyone is present or can be represented in the collection. This is still a very valid point for debate.

**John Beverley** This matter of the duty to historicise the museum reminds me that the museum is associated with colonialism. The origins of modern museums and the development of colonial systems, starting with Spain, are linked. Perhaps what is exhibited in the museum of contemporary art is different from what is exhibited in other museums with colonial origins, but it is booty, something which has been stolen, and the debates are [about] confiscation. Contemporary debates on the rights of countries from which artefacts were stolen to have them returned, or demands by native groups for artefacts in museums to be returned to them because they have religious significance, are very interesting to me, relevant and close [to my heart]. In this sense, the museum has always been within (and perhaps it cannot escape this) the history of domination and expropriation. This is part of its constitutional identity. As I have committed the foolishness of talking about Communism, I'll commit another imprudence: which is that if we take the ideas stemming from Gramsci seriously, but also as part of the cultural critique of modernity, that culture and its cultural institutions are a space in which relationships of social inequality are produced and reproduced. The museum's problem is not just one of representing subalternity, but rather that the museum is involved in the production of relationships of cultural authority, and thus of inequality. I believe that if we accept this concept, we have to rethink daringly the problem of cultural revolution, because without one, cultural institutions will continue producing differences of class, genre, ethnology, cultural authority, etc.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** I am not here as a representative of MoMA; I quit in 2002, when I was offered a better job and a pay rise. And I must say that I don't feel the wish to speak about that institution except in a horizontal way, which is the way museum curators behave. I believe that MoMA has been hijacked by curators for their own career aims; they are not there for a collective institutional plan. The last thing I did in the museum was a seminar to discuss the presence of Latin American art in the museum, and the curators, even Latin American ones and those working in the museum, were seen only on the day Glenn Lowry was there; in other words, they came so the museum director could see them. Last year another very interesting conference was held there, with people from Latin America, Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Oceania, and there were no museum curators, only those who spoke and [promptly] left. In other words, within the museum itself there was no intention to formulate a collective policy. I told them: either you open your doors from inside, or the world will open them from the outside, because it is not possible to continue like this. And I think that outside forces are going to force the museum to open up, through the criticisms the institution deserves, and I perceive the great acuteness of this. This is criticism that in a way claims a role for this museum. There is a lament, an ethos in society, that begs for a museum to mean something in this complex time.

**Suely Rolnik** There is a problem in Latin America, although not only there, which is that the surge of creation has arisen out of lots of violence and the memory of cultural creation is a very traumatised memory. Where Argentina, which I envy, attempts to do as much as possible with this memory, in Brazil nothing is done. Funnily enough, since I have been the harshest critic of museums, recently I have come to see that, in Latin America, the collection and production of history from the museum's standpoint is very important. And this is because, at least in Brazil, it is the only institution that is truly dedicated to research on the cultural memory of the country. This is very important, above all because of the history of the country, but also to avoid terrible events, such as what is happening in Texas. At a time when work has not even started on the elaboration of our own memory, all the documents are migrating to Texas...

**Paulo Herkenhoff** Or to the Getty. But still it is partly our responsibility...

**Suely Rolnik** Of course!

**Paulo Herkenhoff** ...because they were available and on sale, but our institutions didn't want them until now.

**Suely Rolnik** That is what I am saying, that Latin American museums have a very important responsibility. I don't know how you see it, but I ask myself what other institution would be able to develop research in this direction. I don't mean research to create museums of the history of Latin American art that adopt European or North American standards, but rather building that history of a memory that is seriously wounded from a cultural point of view. The thing you are talking about, Paulo, I consider to be the trauma of cultural creation in our countries in different ways. And it is something very serious, not to be taken lightly, the hole is very serious.

**Gustavo Buntinx** That hole is also an amnesia, but I believe it is a good cue to return to earlier remarks, such as the dilemmas between the state and the market as well. There is no committed market with the memory of our country that can maintain these material remnants of history and, at the same time, there does not exist a state policy that could grant patrimony to this type of register or document. I understand that in several European countries, for certain types of cultural products, either works of art or documents, to leave the country, there needs to be a complex procedure in which, above all, various local authorities have a first option to purchase. In other words, there is no prohibition of the market, but there is state regulation in the commercial transaction of the memory. It is fascinating, for terrible reasons, that this type of policy has not even been conceived, let alone formulated, in our countries.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** I worked in the National Museum of Beaux Arts this year, and since 1990 not a single work of art was purchased, not under the Lula government nor the Cardoso government. But there are some things we need to think about, such as the arrangements of the law of patronage. The Massi de Frieira reform liquidated the process and the chance of acquisitions. As all Brazilians know, those collecting today are the banks. Banks in Brazil have the highest rates in the world for loans, of around 15-19% per annum, and it is one of the places in the world where banking invest-

ments grow fastest. Banks are those building up collections. And these collections are not always available to society or for loan. Another thing, which is always a financial matter, is the situation, and I am going to say it in a very indiscreet and informal way, of Brazilian collections. In Brazil wealthy people do not pay taxes for transfers. If you have a house that costs five million dollars and declare it to be worth ten thousand dollars, that is okay. I don't know of a single work of an artist that has reached a public museum by bequest. I know of many family legacies that were arranged with public money for the market. This is a serious matter. Another thing is that if I don't pay inheritance tax, and the market quite frequently assumes this is illegal, this work will never reach the museums. We are in this sense, in the terms of Brazilian law, in a no man's land in terms of tax democracy, like during the mid-nineteenth century. This is a bomb that is going to explode on artists, galleries and collectors. When we get a tax system capable of evaluating a work of art, it is going to be a problem for many people.

**Audience** I am pretty optimistic about the visibility of subalternity in the short-term in museums, because I believe that subalternity is found in museums more and more – or better still, those of us entering museums begin to form part of subalternity to a greater degree, and not by choice. We must not be so arrogant as to think it is necessary to represent subalternity, but we would save valuable time if we took advantage of this experience in resistance to start habilitating spaces in museums not just to represent subalternity, but for subalternity to represent itself. We must start to create spaces for negotiation, activate alliance policies, as John Beverley explained. We must bear in mind that it is not just that we want to represent, but that we will be representing ourselves more and more.

**Paulo Herkenhoff** I think that the matter of self-representation in subalternity is difficult, above all in a racist society, such as in Brazil, for example, where the concepts of the cordial man and racial democracy are a modern reconstruction of a mobile society, but where the black population lacks mobility. Today in Brazil we have six thousand slaves, people working in conditions that the United Nations define as slavery. And the matter of history of art in respect of black people is for me a permanent genocide, a permanent elimination. And I can mention two cases of black artists with Brazilian origins, Ruben Valentín, in the Pinacoteca collection, who is an artist whose work brings out the African heritage of the folkloric, exotic point of view, as white upper-middle-class artists saw it, and transformed it into a heritage of spiritual values. His work is a geometric work that has something to do with the symbolic construction of a vocabulary of Torres-García symbols, but which has its origins in Africa. An impeccable artist who earned a beautiful write-up from Giulio Carlo Argan, the favourite critic of European formalists, the sole Brazilian to do so. But some *Greenbergian* formalists contended that Rubén Valentín is an aesthetic failure. For this reason I say that the Brazilian press are currently doing damage to this Biennial of São Paulo: because it is not a biennial in which concepts are discussed in the light of what the artists say they, invent a biennial that is more linked to the market, and a vision of the best of worlds. The only artist that hurts is Maretto, a Greek artist who lives on the inland of Bahía. I believe there is a violent process of discussion, as Ana and Gustavo's presentations indicated. The other example, a very important one, is

the ghetto concept of Cildo Meireles, which, due to enclosed energy circulates with higher density. This has a direct relationship with the black holes in outer space, and he speaks of situations where there is an absence of air, in which the voice will not be propagated. For this reason he builds a monument to the political prisoner, making a connection between the political prisoner of the dictatorship of the 1960s and our independence hero, and he burns chickens alive. There is a reference to bonzos, of course, in the way of killing these chickens, but defending human lives. Cildo said that today he would not do this work, but at that time it was absolutely necessary. The other moment in which the notion of quietness is very important for Cildo is related to the Indians. Cildo's father worked in the service for protection of the Indians. It was the first time in Brazil that the author of a genocide was imprisoned. The achievement of Cildo Merieles at that time is that he also establishes a voice capable of verbalising the cultural specificity of this group.

**Teresa Velázquez** Thank you, Paulo. Due to reasons of timing, we must stop here. Thank you to our guests and to all of you for being here.

# TOWARDS A PERVERTED PEDAGOGY

MAIN SPEAKER: RENÉ SCHÉRER

OTHER PARTICIPANTS: MANUEL ASENSI,

UTE META BAUER AND MARTHA ROSLER

MODERATOR: JUAN DE NIEVES

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**Juan de Nieves** Now we shall start the last of the sessions that have gathered us here during the last few days and discuss museums and possible educational strategies. A thorny subject, as the transmission of knowledge and the tools museums have for this are undoubtedly the *raison d'être* of the museum as an institution and in its various fields of activity. Let us consider that 'exhibition' is just one of these, but not the only one that museum institutions handle.

Perhaps it is a matter of asking whether the educational programmes applied in our centres, doubtlessly all well-intentioned, are not perpetrating some rather dubious values, which educational institutions par excellence (schools, the university, etc.) have traditionally generated. Quite frequently, from the viewpoint of the museum, we have the feeling of acting like the sounding board of a wounded and barely reviewed educational system. Thus, the museum neither should nor could become a dogmatic and quite frequently sustained institution based on inequality. I am sure that after the presentations of the speakers and conferences we will have today, it will be possible for us to draw conclusions that may not be immediate, but rather some considerations of enormous usefulness for the museum.

It is a real pleasure to have René Schérer here with us. He is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the Paris VIII-Saint Denis University, whose studies focus on pedagogy from a radical point of view. As you are all aware, the title of this table is taken from one of his best-known books, *Emile perversi*, published in France in 1974 and fortunately, although rather late (ten years later), in Spanish under the title of *La Pedagogía Perversida*. As you all are aware, the starting point it is based on is *Emile*, by Rousseau, the founding work of Western pedagogy. I will not go into depth on the radical content of this work by René Schérer, because we also have with us an authority on the matter, Manuel Asensi, who I am going to introduce to you shortly.

But please let me read a short paragraph from the epigraph of this fascinating, and in my view revealing, book. The epigraph is titled 'Against the sect of teachers and educators.' Thank you for your attention:

*A pretty sight, that of our educators!, from now on the only possibility is the total isolation of current pedagogic practices. Down with schools! Fine; but this still does not mean much, and it makes no difference if we go to another place to be taught the same things by other means. Even more so when schools offer the heretofore unknown advantage in civilisation of having at their disposal, outside the family sphere, innumerable groups of children. What needs to be removed is pedagogic vice.*

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Manuel Asensi will be with René Schérer after his speech, and they will carry out a dialogue between them prior to the debate that will then take place with the rest of the speakers. Manuel Asensi is a Professor of Literary Theory at the University of Valencia, so I think his presence at this table is justified first, because he works in teaching and, of course, because of his deep knowledge of the work of René Schérer, and at the same time due to his links with museum institutions, as he heads MACBA's independent study programme, which arises from the will to understand art, the body and educational work as a precise way of social intervention. I will leave the table and pass the floor on to René Schérer.

**René Scherer** I feel honoured to speak to you. I will improvise a few words on the subject that was suggested to me: childhood in a setting that is both educational and aesthetic. For this I will focus my attention on poets, in the manner of my friend, Gilles Deleuze, who died recently, in his philosophy.

I would like to use some poetic formulas, such as the four he used in a famous lecture to explain the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. I will use two poetic formulas to explain my considerations on childhood.

I have taken my first one from a highly respected translation by Rilke of a German text that shows a child in a constellation. It is an enigmatic formula, yet extremely beautiful, in my opinion, and very evocative. It places the matter of the child as a question, as a problem; in other words, it invites us to state that the child is not something obvious, absolutely natural, but rather that it exists eternally. Yet there is an underlying question: Who is this child? This is the first formula that we will develop as we consider the matter.

The second goes in the same direction and I find it equally interesting. This is a formula by Carl Spitteler, an author not all of us are lucky enough to be familiar with, as with Rilke, despite the fact that he won the Nobel prize in 1919. This writer had his moment of glory at that time, towards the end of the 19th century, and he is familiar to a very diverse audience; for example, he wrote a book titled *Imago*, which gave Freud the idea for the title for his first psychoanalytical text, also titled *Imago*. I will not sum up the meaning of the book, but will simply state that it is the basis for a reflection, an analysis of the author himself. Carl Spitteler was also a reference point for Walter Benjamin, who speaks profusely about Carl Spitteler in his letters, particularly those from his youth, guided in his education by the great epic poems Spitteler wrote towards the end of the 19th century. Thus he is an author who is not universally known, certainly more obscure and of somewhat lower value than Rainer Maria Rilke, yet he has written interesting things.

Let us go back to the formula I mentioned. This reflection on oneself is a sort of self-analysis and meditation on one's own childhood, seen from inside. Thus I use this expression: a view from inside, a thought from within. There is no childhood; childhood is a creation by adults. This expression leads us to think of poetry as well, which is also a creation, a fiction. Therefore, childhood is not necessarily the children we see in front of us, but it is ourselves. In other words, seen from within, a link is established between the child and ourselves, making a difference between what belongs to childhood and what to adulthood. Thus the question of childhood is also a matter for the adult. At which point do we cease being children? This is what probably interested

Freud in Carl Spitteler's works, this idea of positive resemblance that Freud developed: this problem of the gap between the state of infancy and the adult state which seems so obvious to us all, is coded by the laws, by all the current thinking about childhood. Do we cease being children? Do we begin to be adults? And do we cease being adults? Is an adult the final stage of childhood?

This is a very important problem because, as we will see later in the conclusion, in these two formulas it is possible to view for certain that we can fundamentally question the existence of an adult state; and at the same time it is possible to question whether the adult state is the end of childhood. These two subjects are the elements of the problem stated here. I will sum it up briefly in the matter we are going to develop: Does childhood exist? Our answer is no, the child does not exist; correlatively this also means that adults don't exist either. In my opinion, this is the first thought that can be suggested by Carl Spitteler's formula.

Thus, I underline, in the first formula by Rainer Maria Rilke, the child is shown to us; this 'showing' is obviously in the present tense, yet it is also something likely, a possibility; it can also be translated into the future: 'it will show us, it will say what it is'; it is also possible to speak about the child this way.

Further on, I will equally emphasise this formula by Rilke and something that does not appear in languages such as French or Spanish which grant the child a gender – not a sex, but a gender: the masculine one. In French the word child is masculine and it also includes the feminine; it is possible to say '*un enfant*' (masculine) to refer to a girl. Spanish has other possibilities as it is said differently in masculine and feminine. German states it in a different way, in the neuter; the child is a neuter word (*das Kind*). The latter is a very important idea in the sense that the first educational orientations associated with the child consist in attributing the child a sex and identifying it, or wishing to structure it, as stated in certain educational languages that follow psychoanalysis and have their source in Freud himself. The child will be structured according to an identity.

This idea of structuring the child according to a sexual identity matches Spitteler's words that speak of fiction, of something fabricated. In French, I believe the title given to a book a few years ago *The Manufacture of Males*, which stresses the fact that the social attribute of the masculine sex, manhood, was the object of ceaseless fabrication by pedagogy.

Thus, although the word 'child' in Germany had no indications particularly orientated towards the sense of sexual neutrality, nor criticism of manufacturing of males, if we think a little about the sense of the language, this attribution of the neuter form of the child is not lacking in interest. Neutrality makes us see that the neuter is not necessarily inferior; it is not an absence, a lack. It is rather a sort of indecision: in other words, the child does not necessarily belong to the masculine or feminine genders. And it is clear, if we reflect on this sense, that educational methods and educational customs, the Latin '*habitus*' or traditional educational customs, lead precisely to the sense of separating the sexes, the construction of a sexual identity. Perhaps childhood is a state just beyond, which is not inferior to identity but rather its opposite, because this neuter state goes beyond separation, which is frequently decisive and exclusive. Separation creates exclusions, whereas being neuter is the opposite, it creates inclusions. The sexual neutrality of childhood must be read and understood in the sense of an inclusion that is progressive in individual evolution, individual organic development, whereas

socially it is transformed into differential exclusions. Childhood neutrality does not suppress the feminine or masculine orientation; it is what could be called an inclusive disjunction, instead of being an excluding disjunction, as frequently perceived in the development of educational thinking.

I will finish the first part of my talk here. It has consisted in clarifying somewhat what could be some of the thoughts suggested by the formulas by Rilke and Spitteler. In the second part I will develop this theory, starting off with these formulas and, in particular, Rilke's formula.

Rilke situates the child in a constellation. This word 'constellation' can be also a subject for consideration in German. The word could be understood, according to Rilke's thinking, as a magnification or, in other words, a 'sublimation', if this word were not too ambiguous in the psychoanalytical field, as psychoanalytical sublimation designates a particular phenomenon: de-sexualisation. This is not at all Rilke's way of thinking. It is therefore not a problem of sexualisation or de-sexualisation but rather that in this constellation there are magnifications that are not, strictly speaking, sublimations. This is a magnification of infancy. In the constellation there is a sort of being with a body; another world that is manifested on Earth yet with a celestial origin. We will go back to this same thought later on, almost simultaneously, in *Doctor Faustus*, a book by Thomas Mann in which he speaks of childhood in the same way, as a sort of celestial emanation that irradiates the face and behaviour of the child. We can keep this expression: the child belongs to a constellation. In my opinion, this is proof that one way or another there is some sort of 'extraterrestrial' existence in the appearance of the child. 'Extraterrestrial' must be placed in quotes, because what immediately comes to mind is E.T. or Martians or monstrous extraterrestrial beings as depicted today. This is not the case, which would lead us to an interesting subject in childhood, but rather go beyond our pedagogy on infancy: we will stay with the child, as perceived by people who establish a sort of relationship with the otherworldly, the non-human, extraordinary, monstrous and see it in general as imaginative, extravagant properties of childish imagination.

This expression has much deeper roots and precisely shows that there is something, in the child and around the child, which arises from a constellation; that the child is not saturated or satisfied by the people around him or her, by the set of human institutions that surround the child.

From an institutional point of view, childhood has doubtlessly as its exclusive constellation the family, or what could be called suitable educational personnel. This constellation, however, is not fixed, but has changed historically. The child has always been surrounded by people in charge of caring for him or her. Thus it is possible to say that the child has the institutional setting that surrounds him or her as constellation: in other words, the family members, the couple, educator or nowadays, the social worker or the judge or policeman in charge of him or her. In sum, childhood is permanently determined by the institutional references that will enable us to situate it, qualify it and make it enter the category of segmentation in force at the time in the institutional frameworks within which the child will be placed.

Rilke's constellation is precisely something that takes us beyond this segmentation. And, to use Deleuze's logic, I would say that privative and exclusive segmentation is replaced by the awakening of our world, or the form of movement that has drawn the child. The rigidity of segmentation is replaced by molecular flow, in other words,

movement, fluidity of possibilities that are destined to arouse what exists in latent form, at times completely choked, and of which we have no clear awareness consequently. This constellation leads us to break away from a certain deterministic framework to lead us to another field: the field of fluid motion.

The last point of this reflection leads me to the word 'movement'. This word will be the third reference, without a quote, as I have no quote to speak of this poetic field, but it could certainly be found. The third reference is Charles Fourier, an author whose theories are ruled, as you know, by the idea of movement, understood as passionate attraction. Charles Fourier's work began to be known precisely because of a book titled *The Four Movements Theory*. Among these four movements one is the movement of attraction, which is directed by the material movement of outer-space magnetisms. However, apart from this, it can be said that these four movements identify with material movement just as it is perceived by Newton. These movements are of different genres, according to the different creation kingdoms: an animal, inorganic and essential movement, that serves, in his words, as a pivot, in other words, centre, and is found in all places analogically; this is passionate movement. At the very heart of the constellation the child belongs to and which moves around the child; this centre is constituted by the exercise of his passions, the passions set free, set in motion. Civilisation, according to Fourier, is what built some frameworks around the child that brake movement, that blocked this passionate movement, even as an educational principle. It can be said that these frameworks are dedicated to orienting and blocking passion movement when education, as understood by Fourier, is dedicated on the contrary to discovering the elements that enable development of passionate movement according to what will be the constitution of a new social order. Thus it is not possible to conceive children's education and teaching without considering at the same time the complete transformation of a social order, while all educational institutions are busy with the opposite; immobilising the expansion of passionate movement. Thus his conclusion concern both childhood and pedagogical studies.

To carry on with this theory, I will back up my statements with another reference that I will choose from contemporary authors, in an extract of a text that has been translated into, I believe, many languages and recently, into French. This is Pier Paolo Pasolini. This work, the last he wrote (I don't know if he published it himself in 1975) is titled *Lutheran Letters*. The word 'Lutheran' alludes to this heresy, this heretical reflection: it has always been a key theme in Pasolini's genre, heretical empirics, heretic experience; in his films, too, Pasolini wrote on the subject. In the *Lutheran Letters*, in other words the heretical letters, he develops a vision that is not quite a theory, but rather a sort of pedagogic vision, as in the novel he addresses letters to a young boy advising him on how to live his life, to open up his way in existence.

I will stick only to that which enables fixing the ideas and reflecting in a very intense way on the notion of education, of possible education.

Pasolini distinguishes three educations and poses this question to the young man, whose name I cannot remember: Who are your educators? Who are your genuine educators? And he distinguishes three educations; the first one, which is the most despicable, the most inexistent and the most impotent, the one that comes from parents and educators, strictly speaking. What is known as education is, in the first place, artificial education, which has very little importance for him but is precisely the education taught by adults.

The second one, which is more important and perhaps essential, is the education that comes from peers. (It is interesting to see that this has an involuntary correspondence with Fourier's ideas, since they never met). This education is very important for the child. Yet there is a third, according to Pasolini, which is the most important and perhaps the only one. It is the one he calls, in quite an enigmatic yet thought-provoking way, the education of things. The education of things is the only one that is important to the child. What does Pasolini understand by 'things'? The word must be left, in Italian as well as French and all languages, in its vagueness. The education of things is that taught by what the child discovers, what he or she sees around him or her. It is what constitutes the material and social world and its transformations and accidents; today one could say the violence of things. Due to my creative temperament and with the passing of time, I would be more in favour of protecting children from the violence of things, but with some reservation, because I believe that it is equally wrong to try to protect the child from the violence of things; it would deprive the child of something more important and also, historically, essential to his or her upbringing. This is what Pasolini means: no matter what is done, in other words, no matter what pedagogic elements are used around the child, pedagogy based on utopias and ever more on the brink of failure leads contemporary civilisation to protect the child from the education of things.

I believe that a primary critical pedagogical analysis should be made of these ideological protectionist phantasms, positive and negative. The child should neither be protected from nor put in effective contact with violence that could be destructive, but equally should not be put exclusively in a place or places that artificially protect them from the education of things, even the violence of things.

Current educational theories go against these proposals. Nowadays the opposite takes place: an attempt is made to increase the pedagogic protective elements in closed places, located in an artificial margin in an adult world perceived as more or less hostile to the child – above all, in the sexual field. In what Fourier called civilisation, what could be called, in terms more fitted to our contemporary ideas and which I borrow from Michel Foucault, 'the language of institutional elements', there is an orientation precisely opposite to those indicated by the formulas or references I have just mentioned. Thus, in summary in this talk I have given some references that will enable us to focus on infancy and educational, or pedagogic, orientations. Concerning infancy, we must not regard the data as absolutely stable, but remember, in summary, that this rigid category called the child, seen as the infancy of the adult, does not exist; just as the adult does not exist either. There exist simply devices of power, some of which mould something we will call childhood, seen as the infancy of the adult. The only other possibility is the one that would tend to replace these elements of power with what, in our language, could be called the passionate aspects. These are not necessarily collective; in other words, they are not interesting to the adult or the adult world, nor the childhood of an isolated child, but they have to be situated in the medium of childhood itself and that which socially surrounds it; the medium of a child, where he was born and in which he has developed.

Besides this substitution of passionate aspects for the devices of power, there is the education of things: in other words, granting the child the opportunity to make contact with things, intervene with those things.

To conclude, today everyone knows that education totally eschews adult society,

thrashing around without any hope of achieving a completely Utopian dominion that tends, despite all, to preserve what is strictly impossible to carry out. I use the word 'Utopian' here in a negative sense, because it could be replaced by another form of Utopia that goes against this tendency. We must not become obsessed with this pedagogic Utopia that leads us nowhere. We should consider it precisely in light of the fact that childhood is again posed as a problem, as is suggested in areas beyond specialised pedagogy, by people in contact, or who have been in contact, with a 'preserved' infancy, who knew how to become children again. Among these are Pasolini, Rilke, Spitteler – all poets, or all those who opened their eyes to what can characterise childhood; in summary, those who know how to escape from a totally negative view of the possibility of opening a way into a field of passionate enrichment.

Manuel Asensi, who will speak now, reminded me yesterday of a passage by Proust from *Within a Budding Grove*, in which he alludes precisely to this 'preserved childhood' – what Deleuze would call 'becoming a child'.

To end, I wish to say that the real problem is not for the child to become an adult, but rather for the adult to become a child.

**Manuel Asensi** Well, with the aim of letting René go deeper into some of the things he has said here, to start with, I am going to try to place his contribution within the framework of this discussion. Afterwards, perhaps, it may be possible to deal with some subjects the audience may wish to raise. Before we start, I will say one small thing. I don't believe that the presence of René Schérer in this debate needs any justification, but I would like to allude to three or four matters that I include in a list of titles, which could serve to draw some consequences of what René Schérer has said from a purely philosophical point of view. It is striking that in what we could call radical thinking from the 70s until now, including everything to do with the *queer* theory, etc., there has never been an attempt to deal with child sexuality, and fundamentally, the sexual relationship between the adult and the child. So much so, that some time ago, at a talk by Judith Butler, someone in the audience asked about the problem of sexuality in the child, and she answered quite clearly that she was not speaking about that at all, that she was solely speaking about adult sexuality. Well, this also has to do with the problems of legality and penalisation regarding what could be interpreted as an invitation to talk about that. And, in this sense, it could be verified.

For this reason, it is necessary to consider the work by René Schérer, because already during the 70s, coinciding with what was becoming the potent work of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, I would dare to say he is the only one who explicitly studied this subject in an untimely and radical way. This is revealed in *La pedagogía perversa*, a book that is an absolute joy to read because it is not written in any so-called canonical essay key: it is a parody, it is funny, and it really makes the reader laugh. Secondly, I think that one of the fundamental subjects René talked about, or which we can perceive by reading his work, is the degree to which his statements directly affect what can be proven and which cannot be shown in films, as well as in other artistic and literary representations. Manolo Borja told me that in Bordeaux there was recently a contemporary photographic exhibition that was censured because there were children in it, and there had been legal complaints on this matter. Thus what he indicated is a limit to what can and cannot be revealed in an exhibition or art treatment. Thirdly, it is necessary to establish a certain modification

of the term ‘pedagogy’ in order to place Schérer’s thinking within the scope of a museum. For this, it is interesting to recover the etymological meaning of the word ‘pedagogic’, which literally means accompanying someone on a route, on foot moreover. In this sense, the act whereby a spectator enters a series of halls in the museum and tours them, at times accompanied by a guide, is closer to what the word pedagogic implies than the static situation of a school or even what we are doing here.

I am very surprised to find that people who work in museums of contemporary art have celebrated, I imagine for strictly infrastructural reasons, an act of this type in a hall such as this one, which permits few joys, as far as exchange of space is concerned. Yesterday René and I were in the cathedral and we found a small statue of an altar boy, and last night I dared to suggest, almost jokingly, that we bring this statue here and put it on the table. Well, it would have been a way to break the ice as far as the presentation of the subject is concerned. In this sense, I believe it is to the point to deal with something that is also the title of another book by René Schérer, which could be translated as *Going with*.

The last topic would be what that could mean, and how we could imagine introducing the dimension of desire explicitly, in the sense that Schérer alluded to in the context of his speech, and its sense in the different activities of the museum. In the context of a museum quite a few other things can be done which are not mere exhibition, or can be exhibited – and I use the word in its etymological sense; things that are not usually exhibited.

So, continuing with the transformation of the exhibition space, we are going to talk about some things René has suggested. I believe we could go on for a while, at least, expounding what could be considered a reflection on the matter of pedagogy as a guide, especially within the scope of the museum. Possibly one of the questions suggested is the way René’s speech very directly affects all that can and cannot be shown.

**Audience** Thank you very much for the talk. I have found it very interesting and in fact the matter of education is fundamental, in my opinion, although it has been left for the last day. I would like to ask René if in some way translation could be an educational aid. In other words, if translating really turns into an aid, and what power can be activated by and related to it, if it truly is an educational aid.

**René Schérer** For me it would be very difficult to answer that question because I am not a specialist in practical matters within the scope of a museum. The only thing I can say, which again, is outside this matter (although it may be of interest to you) is anecdotal; about twenty years ago, just when the first edition of *Emile perversi* appeared in the market, after reading the book, I was invited by the director of the Kunsthale of Basle, Jean-Christophe Ammann, a friend of Harald Szeemann. At that time I had been seeing an exhibition organised by Szeemann that is very well-known, on the subject of Total Art, an exhibition that included many works, some from the beginning of the 19th century, all dealing with this idea. Ammann had organised a small exhibition, very interesting, that led to a catalogue in which the works of photographer Philippe von Leuven were included. In the first edition of *Emile perversi* there was a photograph by this author. He was represented there along with other lesser-known authors such as von Kupfer, the author of a detailed fresco near the Vanon (a utopic place of the beginning of the 19th century in Switzerland). The fresco



was removed from its original site. It was about fantastic characters who celebrated nudity and homosexuality; a temple the artist dedicated to the celebration of a sort of omnisexual eroticism. On the other hand, there also was a work I had written about associated to childhood, on the work of a not very well-known author, yet a very interesting one, Otto Meyer-Amden. This consisted of a series of drawings and watercolours dedicated to the orphanage of Berne, where he was brought up. He was not an orphan, but simply went to that hospice to be educated. There were very few articles about Meyer-Amden – in Switzerland a few more – but he wrote an important work made up of his correspondence with Oskar Schlemmer, somewhat better known to the public due to his work in Berlin. He also had correspondence with Kandinsky. It must be said that his work participates in the birth of abstract art. If you haven't seen it, it is very difficult to describe, although I can say it consists of small vignettes representing the daily lives of children in that orphanage in Berne. Many of them included nude children, and they were visions – the term the author used – of the daily life of the orphanage, with the dormitories, showers, study rooms, etc. There were also some very important drawings on which I wrote a commentary published in France in 2000. These are very representative and interesting, and I will describe them to give an idea of what they are: this was a drawing lesson in a classroom. We see all the interns sitting at their desks. The viewpoint is from the teacher's desk – the viewer is in the position of the teacher – and what can be seen in the drawing is the students sitting at their desks drawing a model that cannot be seen, though it can be guessed: an antique, a plaster copy of a classic sculpture. We see the two rows of desks and in the middle of one of the rows, a standing student is taking off his clothes. His trousers are on the floor and he is standing in front of the sculpture the other students are copying. As in all Otto Meyer's works, this is not a realistic form in the ordinary sense of the word, but rather a very special kind of treatment. Those of you who have seen his works will understand; those who have not seen them yet, probably won't. It is a style reminiscent of Oskar Schlemmer's, but not exactly the same: a sort of geometric stylisation in nudity, known as *achnaven* – to use the German word – which is reminiscent of the 6th century. I did a commentary about this, and this presentation could be very interesting as an artistic commentary on what practices were permissible. A pedagogic artistic commentary on this drawing would be very interesting, as the child is not only nude but also being very provocative, and this is how the author conceived the drawing. The child, in provoking, seems to say: *you are drawing a dead plaster, why don't you draw me, who am nude and alive?* I want to put this open question to the audience: why not suggest to children in classrooms, as all of us must agree that they have admirable bodies, why not suggest they draw other children? That is the question I suggest, either pedagogically or antipedagogically, taking into account perverted pedagogy.

## THE MUSEUM AND AN INTERRUPTED STROLL

### MANUEL ASENSI PÉREZ

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#### 1) *The museum paradox: preservation and freezing*

Just as René Schérer used Spitteler's and Rilke's poetic references to develop his ideas on childhood, I will use examples from so-called 'popular' culture to guide my reflection on museums. There is a statement that determines the allegorical interpretation of a film such as *Toy Story 2*, when Andy's mother, on discovering his favourite toy has lost an arm, says: 'I'm sorry, my dear, but you know, toys don't last for ever.' So what does last for ever? Human life? Of course not, that is perhaps the most fragile thing. But works of art also do not last for ever; they too can be mutilated or even destroyed by heat or civil war.

Why do I use the film *Toy Story 2* to talk about works of art and museums? The first reason is because the theme of the film itself pertains to the museum as a refuge for toys discarded by their owners, whose destiny is otherwise the rubbish bin or sale counter. The second is that this film is an allegory of, among other things, the relationship between the work of art and the museum. It is this allegoric interpretation that will guide my discussion of museums as anti-pedagogical. True, the film talks about a museum for toys and not a museum of 'works of art', but aside from the fact that a toy can be a product of a *poetic* act, a *tejnë poietiké*, it must be clear that the situation of a toy and a 'work of art' in a museum have too many things in common, even the fact that both have become merchandise. Aside from this, the crisis of the notion of 'work of art' shelters us from some suspicions that could hang over the consideration I have already started to expound to you.

There is a moment in the life of the toys in *Toy Story 2* when they find themselves in the situation of having to make a decision: either to continue the 'life' that sooner or later will lead them to the garbage can and oblivion, or leave the vital current by becoming dolls in a museum for all eternity. Chance makes Woody break an arm, which makes Andy reject him as a toy that will go with him to summer camp, and Woody is relegated to the dusty shelves of forgotten toys. Forgetfulness – repression, expurgation, destruction – threaten all archives, and the museum as archive of works of art is no exception. Derrida said: 'there would be no archive fever without the threat of the death impuls; aggression and destruction. However, this threat is infinite, it carries away with it the logics of finitude and simple factual limits, transcendental aesthetics, spatial-temporal conservation conditions.'<sup>101</sup> On this topic, it is worth remembering another film, *La hora de los valientes* (Antonio Mercero, 1998), in which the threat of destruction by the Fascist bombing of Madrid hangs over the works of art in the Prado Museum. The Republican government makes the decision to move them to Valencia, and there is a sublime scene in which some of the museum staff bring out the 'Meninas' painting by Velázquez to package it for the trip. All those in the corridor as the painting passes through stare at it in ecstasy, conscious of the death threat to an object everyone considers beautiful. As Derrida also writes: 'Archive fever borders on radical disease.'<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> J. Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, University of Chicago Press, 1996 (orig. ed., Paris, Galilée, 1995).

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

### *1.1) First term of the paradox*

The museum performs a paradoxical – even aporetic – function, and the first stage of this aporia is to preserve insofar as possible a work from being lost, destroyed or disfigured, knowing all the while that the corrosive action of time cannot be stopped. This is what the Republican government did when, on the eve of losing the war, it decided to move from Madrid, and take with it the works of art from the Prado. The figure of the attendant named Manuel (played by Gabino Diego in Antonio Mercero's film) becomes a symbol of this conservation when in the middle of a bombardment he notices that the self-portrait of Goya has been forgotten, and decides to take it with him and defend it to the death. In fact, at the end of the film, he is shot, like those shot in another Goya painting, after returning the picture to its place. What is preserved in the case of works of art is a materiality, an artefact (as Mukarovsky would put it), yet a materiality that contains along with what is potentially beautiful and sublime a weapon, or, if we wish to be more precise, something that can be a combat weapon. The people of Madrid thought that it was not a bad idea to sell the works of art to a country which in exchange would supply them with tanks, machine guns and money. Like any condemned creature, the condemned toy represented by Woody anticipates, through dreams and fantasies, the day he will be thrown into the tomb/rubbish bin, where he will be swallowed up by the moving sands of the remnants of toys that lie in a common grave. Another freak of chance leaves him unprotected in a garage sale, where a ruthless capitalist, the owner of a toy shop, steals him with the aim of transforming him into profitable merchandise. In this, the toy is also like a work of art as both are susceptible to being transformed into valuable merchandise. The film establishes the equivalence of the museum and merchandising. If Woody reaches a museum, it will be because some Japanese people are interested in collecting a set of toys that, in the time of black-and-white TV, formed a team of characters of a wild-west town. In other words, because he is a very valuable toy, out of circulation, already out of fashion, no longer desired by children, unfindable in toy stores. So we could state without going too far that Woody is on the brink of becoming a work of art, precisely because he is out of circulation and he has acquired a pragmatic status that is, in a word, 'aesthetic'.

### *1.2) Second term of the paradox*

Once back in Al's house the little cowboy will be restored, his right arm back in place; he will be polished up and back as if brand new, though the old specialist says one must be careful, because if he is mishandled he will break again. That is precisely when he must make a decision: either return to his friends in Andy's house, to live the ups and downs, suffer the carelessness of his owner, or move on to a museum where he will live behind glass and enjoy the nirvana of boredom? To his friend Buzz Lightyear, who has gone out to free him and encourages him to return home, Woody answers 'Until when? A new break and Andy will forget about me, and what do I do then? You tell me!'. So he makes a snap decision to go to the Japanese museum, to be there for all of eternity behind glass, exposed to the gaze of visitors. And here we have the second term of the paradox: the museum transforms the work into an object for aesthetic consumption, for contemplation.

Gadamer, in his monumental work *Warheit und Methode* (1960) stated the complicity between museums and aesthetic conscience, understood in a Kantian-Schillerian way: in other words, as an idea of art that sees in it something that goes beyond good and evil, a non-referential text, a subject that produces pleasure and beauty, a pleasure that is essentially aesthetic. According to Gadamer, the social institution that matches aesthetic conscience and incarnates it in its fullest way is the museum. The museum is very different from the earlier princely or private collections of works of art, which were always organised on the principle of particular tastes. The museum is, rather, a 'collection of collections' so even the historic-chronological criteria of its arrangement reveals the mystified universality of the aesthetic conscience. Gadamer writes: 'The museum is the collection of such collections [the old ones, based on selective tastes], and significantly finds its perfection in hiding the origins of these recollections, whether through historic reorganisation of the whole or by expansion that extends its scope.'<sup>103</sup>

In this sense the museum, insofar as it is an archive of memories, is not limited to ensuring the physical integrity of the works and their supports, but also takes on itself hermeneutic competition and the right, as Derrida says: '...to interpret the archives.'<sup>104</sup> The only problem is that this interpretation precludes the evaluation of the painting or artwork being considered for placement there for 'contemplation'. You can only organise a space to hang the painting on the wall, not always suitably lit, behind the line that prohibits visitors approaching it without a security guard pouncing. [The defence] is to adopt an aesthetic attitude: contemplative, impractical, incommunicable, erudite, historical, studious of beaux arts or history of art. Remo Guideri, among others, established the link between aestheticism, fetishism and mercantilism when stating that the museum phenomenon is matched by an expansion of fetishism: 'It is born from "parallel" fetishisms, which are not necessarily complementary to each other, from our way of assuming and suffering, "loving" coveting objects, of wandering around this.'<sup>105</sup> A line for analysis opens up here around the relationship between 'work of art', merchandise, fetishism and spectrality – which I will not go into here, because my thoughts follow a different direction – that Derrida attacked in his *Spectres de Marx*.<sup>106</sup>

## 2) *The polysystem and the real unspoken power of art*

The question I ask after seeing something which is well-known enough is: what can be done with that paradox of the museum which consists in preserving the integrity of the work of art, and at the same time condemning it to the ostracism of neutral aesthetics? What attitude can be assumed in view of giving life or death? Or as Guideri asks himself: 'What is the "use" of things destined for museums?' I understand that besides this, the answer must be based on the unstateable fact represented by the museum aporia, which I will try to answer on the basis of an emptiness. A long time has gone by since Adorno wrote that 'art is something social, above all because of its

103 H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Seabury Press, 1975.

104 Derrida, op. cit., p. 10

105 Remo Guideri, *El museo y sus fetiches (crónica de lo neutro y de la aureola)*, Madrid, Tecnos, colección Metrópolis, 1997, p. 57 (the original text in French is of 1992).

106 J. Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, Paris, Galilée, 1993.

opposition to society, an opposition it acquires only when it becomes autonomous (...). All that is aesthetically pure, that is structured by its own immanent law, is making a mute criticism, denouncing the downscaling implied by a state of things moving in the direction of a total society of “exchanges”.<sup>107</sup> We could ask Adorno, taking advantage of the fact he is no longer present, what use is a *mute criticism*? It is clear that Adorno is not talking about the museum, yet Sartre underlined quite truthfully that the ‘principle of *l’art pour l’art* that since Baudelaire had prevailed in France was received with great pleasure by bourgeois society because they perceived in it a form of neutralisation.’<sup>108</sup> Stated in another way: the museum has as its function legitimising the autonomy of the aesthetic object, and with this, it makes autonomous to a second degree what is presented in certain works of art as aesthetic structuring. The museum can redouble the autonomouslyness of autonomy, the aesthetics of aestheticism. The structuralists and semioticians were right: for them literary works lack references, and do not need them to supply meaning. The followers of aesthetics of reception, such as Iser, were right in saying that the performance of a literary work or artistic work are failings. No objections there. The unspoken power of the words used by one of the prostitutes in the tavern when knighting Don Quixote (‘Let the Lord make you a very adventurous knight and grant you luck in your jousts’)<sup>109</sup> do not manage to make him a knight, since they are uttered in a false context and not seriously. It is not necessary here to invoke the Derridian deconstruction of the opposition of ‘speech/writing’ that leads him to state that ‘the essential repetition of the sign compromises the distinction between effective and fictitious signs.’<sup>110</sup> If the courtesan’s words owe their condition of possibility to the same cause that allows for these words to grant genuine knighthood to someone in a serious context, in other words, to the fact of being repeatable in the absence of the person pronouncing them, then it is clearly not possible to maintain the opposition between a sign with a reference and a sign with an imaginary reference.

We need not go into the Demanian argument, according to which the distinction between different types of text is not due to the presence or absence of a reference but rather to the rhetoric mode of its use.<sup>111</sup> It is also not worth stopping to delve into feminist or *queer* critiques of semiotics and structuralism, especially in works by Monique Wittig and Judith Butler.

However, it is convenient to make a break and consider the following: although a work of art may lack a necessary reference (for meaningfulness), although the performance acts that are carried out in the plane of its contents, its ‘history’, lack unspoken ‘effective’ power, their way of ‘representing’ reality is ‘real’ because it enables viewing the world in a certain ideological way, and thus it is transformed into

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107 Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, New York, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984 (original German edition is from 1970).

108 J. Paul Sartre, *Qu’est-ce que la littérature*, Paris, Gallimard, 1948.

109 Miguel de Cervantes, *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, 1, 3, p. 93 of the Madrid edition, Clásicos Castalia, 1987.

110 Jacques Derrida, *La voix et le phénomène*, Paris, PUF, 1965.

111 Paul de Man, *Allegories in Reading*, New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979.

a percept through which a subject can perceive 'reality'.<sup>112</sup> As opposed to Deleuze and Guattari, I do not see how one can separate the concepts of percept and affect, no matter that the concept prevails more in philosophy, whereas percept and affect are more sustained in art.<sup>113</sup> This is a pedagogic separation that, in reality, is never stated in a pure way, as the three, to different degrees and measures, are jointly found in philosophy, science and in art. Consequently, the unspoken power of a work of art resides in supplying a filter of the world, which is perceptive and ideological and reinforces or denies the perceptive ideological bases the individual already has. What I am trying to say here is that the subject is permanently bombarded by a multiplicity of ideological precepts of the world, of various semiotic types, from birth until death – and, who knows, maybe beyond it.

One goes to school or university, watches television, reads the papers, the cultural supplements, surfs on the internet, listens to murmurs, hears secrets, flicks through fashion or scientific magazines, goes to the movies, goes to baptisms, weddings, funerals, listens to parents or offspring, reads novels or visits museums. From all those places the subject receives percepts-ideologies that shape his more-or-less coherent – more-or-less uniform – view of the world. In this, literature and art are not different at all from other systems; they are systems that form part of the general polysystem that imposes slogans.<sup>114</sup> What does change is their way of organising their rhetorics and semiotics. We can say, then, that all these percepts-ideologies constitute an entire transcendental aesthetic regarding the way in which the subject thinks, views and understands the world surrounding him.

Therefore, those who state the 'fictitious' character of the work of art are right if by this they understand that semiotic reality and phenomenological reality never coincide, but then, following that same logic, they will be forced to acknowledge that this lack of coincidence between a semiotic reality and a phenomenological reality is not exclusive to artistic signs, but all signs (remember for example, in this respect the definitive critique by Jakobson of the notion of 'artistic realism' and its continuation in the works of the M Group concerning the iconic sign).<sup>115</sup> Those who, on the other hand, defend the 'real' nature of the work of art are right insofar as the performative effect of the work of art is in fact real, but they must admit that the confusion of semiotic and phenomenal reality is what Althusser and Paul de Man have named 'ideology'.

Etienne Bailbar and Pierre Machery were not right when they wrote that 'literature [we add: art] is not (...) fiction, but rather *production of fictions*, or better yet: *produc-*

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112 I am not attempting to use here a naïve 'reality' concept. 'Reality' can be identified with what Marx and Engels describe as object in their study in *German Ideology*: 'The premises we start off with (...) are the real individuals, their action and their material living conditions, both those that they have encountered as well as those created by their own actions. These premises can be verified consequently through a purely empirical method,' according to the translation by Wenceslao Roces in Barcelona, Grijalbo, 1970, p. 19. For me there is no doubt that that notion of 'reality' perfectly withstands Kantian, Lacanian or Derridian manifestations. When Derrida wrote that statement that has been so wrongly interpreted according to which there is no 'beyond the text' (*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*), in no way was he referring to everything in the world being a verbal or other type of text of any kind, but rather that there is no empirical experience that is not mediated by a mark, a trace or gram. (See *De la grammatologie*, Paris, Minuit, 1967, which had already been the base of the critique of semiotic thinking by Husserl in *Voice and Phenomenon*, op. cit.)

113 Gilles Deleuze y Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, Columbia University Press, 1994 (the original French edition is from 1991).

114 'In school, slogans are the only thing offered' is a phrase by Deleuze.

115 Grupo M, *Tratado del signo visual (para una retórica de la imagen)*, Madrid, Cátedra, 1992.

tion of fictional effects'.<sup>116</sup> The formula is more like the following: art is a fiction, that is, a deformation of phenomenal reality (an ideology) that produces effects of reality. When speaking of 'effects of reality' I mean to say that the spectator or reader acquires a perception of the world which in many cases leads him or her to act in a certain way in the empirical world. And it is clear that the action is automatically linked to the ethical and political dimension.

Consider Don Quixote: some fictitious works, ideological, deforming, as were novels of chivalry, have on Alonso Quijano the performative effect of transforming him into a Don Quixote who steps out into the world behaving like an Amadís de Gaula and see in windmills the reincarnation of Briareo, the giant. Let us consider *Toy Story 2*: Woody's discovery of the TV show in which he appeared as the star character with the cowgirl, BB Ball and the Miner, is a construction that is semiotic, ideological, de-formative, and creates in him the effect of wanting to go to the museum, an effect that is reinforced by his recent rejection by Andy. The courtesan who holds in her laughter and takes up the sword of Don Quixote tells him: 'Let the Lord make you a very adventurous knight and grant you luck in your jousts' is, of course, saying something that is neither suitable to the thing she is describing nor has real unspoken power, but appeals to Don Quixote in such a way that he feels that he already is a knight in armour and proceeds to behave as such and free a boy being whipped by a peasant. Thus, the sentence of the prologue in which Miguel de Cervantes declares that his book 'is an invective against books of chivalry',<sup>117</sup> must be read literally, as, aside from the fact that one can be or not be really against the progressive ideology of burgeoning capitalism, aside from constantly sabotaging the opposition between reality and fiction, what his book explains is the problem of the real performative effect of fiction. A similar analysis can be found in Proust when he refers to how Elstir influenced his way of perceiving things.

### 3) *The museum as antipedagogical*

And here is where I link up with the theory of the museum as a perverted pedagogy to say that the museum can be situated in open contradiction with general pedagogic models. All museum practice, its cultural activities, exhibitions, etc., presuppose a certain way of conceiving what is art. The museum is placed, in respect of what has been exposed, in a metalinguistic, hermeneutic position. In this sense it is a percept-ideology that overlaps and frames the percept-ideology of the work of art. In the same way as Benjamin stated in *The Author as Producer* that a work of art cannot uphold a revolutionary posture unless the material conditions of its circulation change, a museum that does not change the material conditions in which it enables the viewing and representing the work of art will never have a revolutionary capacity.

Thus it has the option of adopting a certain interpreting theory and practice. The usual thing is a predominance of representative exposition that is mostly merely positivistic, which presupposes a dialogue between the work and the viewer, a dialogue that can become magisterial and therefore pedagogical: supplier of correlative slogans

116 Etienne Balibar and Pierre Machery, 'Sur la littérature comme forme idéologique: Quelques hypothèses Marxistes', in Althusser et al., *Para una crítica del fetichismo literario*, Madrid, Aka1, 1975, p. 38. (the original French edition is from 1974).

117 Miguel de Cervantes, op. cit., p. 57.



of the school and institutional models. A sample of this is supplied by Mareile Boehmer: ‘Work with a large number of students in grade school shows that at that age children are very rarely motivated to bother with works of art,’<sup>118</sup> she writes. This is due to museum practices she mentions which attempt to be a continuation or extension of study plans and school and university subjects. However, if we understand that the museum is a percept-ideology, a semiotic construction that doubles, quotes, denies and transforms the material exhibited; if the museum on its own has a performative and real effect on the viewer, if the museum would adopt a ‘critical’ attitude with a capacity to intervene socially in an anti-systemic way, then it must start up a break-away exhibitional model insofar as the relationship between the viewer and the work of art is concerned. This expository rupture model can be identified as a deconstructive practice, or better, I would say, as a practice of sabotage and could carry out actions such as:

- a) Sharpen or map out the contradictions between the different visions-percepts of the world construed in the works exhibited and in other systems.
- b) Present a genotextual genealogy of the work (in a Nietzschean-Foucaultian sense). Or in other words: introduce a temporal, historic dimension to the exhibition.
- c) Practice bizarre readings that subvert the right to view (*le droit du regard* that Derrida talks about).
- d) Circulate what Brecht called ‘alienation effects’ when considering epic theatre plays.

## DEINSTRUMENTALISING KNOWLEDGE

### INTERVIEW WITH MARTHA ROSLER

[The artist wanted her prepared speech changed for this interview]

**Stephen Wright** The Martha Rosler Library is at once a fully functional library and a proposition of a library. This sits very nicely with your work, since as you once put it, in a conversation with Benjamin Buchloh: ‘Everything I have ever done I’ve thought of “as if”. Every single thing I have offered to the public has been offered as a suggestion of work.’ So let’s start with your notion of the As-If.

**Martha Rosler** It’s related to my notion of the decoy, which is that something appears *as if* it has a certain function, but actually it’s a lure of sorts, a proposition, which invites the viewer to be the one who constructs the work’s meaning or even the work itself.

**SW** Yet you often discuss the As-If in conjunction with the notion of thinness – another of your keywords – where the construction has to be thin enough to come apart at the seams. This obviously has to do with how the work is put together by the artist, if the viewer or user is to engage with it constructively.

**MR** If a work is too slick or too autonomous it gains an authority over the viewer,

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118 *Museos de Alemania occidental*), Barcelona, Publicacions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 1981, p. 26.

which is a notion that comes from abstract expressionism. Duchamp, by introducing randomness and sarcasm, found a technical way of evading the notion of the work as mastering the viewer – consuming or ‘eating’ the viewer, as I like to say. If a work is thin, its status as a proposition is more apparent... and propositions can be overturned or modified.

**SW** The As-If structure lends itself to that because it is a self-conscious As-If. In the As-If, you have a double-focusing device; on the one hand, the imaginary, and on the other, consciousness. There is a practical task to be resolved, so consciousness will ultimately prevail, but is nonetheless somehow refracted through the lens of the imaginary.

**MR** And of course unconscious processes are always at work, drawing you in, asking more of you in working on the proposition, because it is routed through the imaginary. I got to that notion long before its subsequent ironisation by such shows as *Hollywood 90210*, where ‘as if’ tends to mean ‘you wish’, as a way of deflating self-projection. I detect might feel myself in sympathy with that deflationary element, but more to the point, I prefer to show things as projected dreams or suggestions that people can project on to, or read from, rather than situations where the artwork is so solid that ‘it is what it is’, so to speak.

**SW** How does that hook into the heterodoxy which has consistently characterised your practice – the idea that there is no one source of knowledge, no one line of production?

**MR** To be a bit romantic about it, I’m the typical guerrilla street fighter, looking to throw a punch and then ducking behind a barricade before throwing another punch. I don’t see what the point of a consistent line of product is – it’s a deflection. To show my belief in the strength of form, the fact that I chose to go back to the montages of the anti-war work of the 60s to do anti-war work today is a way of saying that there are forms of expression that carry with them significations that are useful. But I do not feel that it covers every sort of address, every sort of proposition or way of approaching the same subject matter. I think it’s important to evade expectations because otherwise it is just one more thing from the hand of, or the mind or the eye of, the artist, and that empties the form of anything other than a certain confirmatory characteristic, where it is the variations that count, but where there is no significant or specific message being carried.

**SW** Heterodoxy is always related to the question of the addressees. Doesn’t your heterodoxy have to do with having a double target?

**MR** Like so many, I would like to be speaking to the uninitiated as much as to the initiated, yet not to do so without signalling to the uninitiated that there isn’t more than actually meets the eye – their unarmed eye. So there is always something of a riddle in the work. For the art-world person, the riddle element is the way in which mass culture or other non-aesthetic elements are invoked. I’m not saying that mass culture is unaesthetic, but it holds out another possibility for evoking things beyond the range

of simple aesthetic address in favour of something entirely different. Heterodoxy enmeshes us in conflicting messages, channels and receivers. In order to do that, I need to evade having the work take on aspects of mastery, because otherwise it speaks too exclusively about its own form.

**SW** Well to bring in a little mass culture, as Dolly Parton once put it: 'It costs a lot to look this cheap!'

**MR** Decoys are often very well made, aren't they? Sometimes mistakes are mannerist in the sense that they are not necessarily unplanned-for. And by mistakes I mean not necessarily chance or accident, but things that involve distorting the sound of a familiar piece of pop music, making it sound as if there were something wrong with the tape recorder, though in fact there was a hand manipulating it; ways of interfering with the expected that look ham-handed, but birds who want to distract from the nest will sometimes mimic a hurt wing in order to draw the hunter somewhere else. With regard not to hunters but to audiences, it is a way of drawing them somewhere without holding a gun to their heads – by suggesting that something else is going on or having them look somewhere else. This is a well-known tactic of artists: to appear to be naïve or foolish or unaware. It lowers the temperature of the emotional response of the audience and reassures them that you're not trying to 'put one over' them. The basis of a great deal of comedy, of the non-verbal dictum of slapstick comedy in particular, is to take a pratfall. But if you know anything about stagecraft, you know it takes skill to take a pratfall without breaking your neck.

**SW** That reminds me of a recent conversation I had with a young curator, who said that artists today who are not absolute masters of video should abstain from doing video and do something else. I was a bit taken aback, so I said, 'What about Martha Rosler?' To which she replied that one could do that earlier on in the history of the medium, but no longer today.

**MR** Well, that is a logical statement; there is a period in the formation of any new medium of open experimentation in which every gesture is an amazing gesture and every moment a declaration of modesty on the part of an artist who says, 'Gee, I don't really know what I'm doing, maybe you could help me out.' This is accepted for a time and then media go on to develop higher production values. But it is only true if you want it to be true. You can accept that as the natural direction of things. But Jean-Luc Godard is the best example of someone who just said, 'You think we need to stop investigating the means of production of meaning through cinema; well, I think quite the opposite is true. What we need to do is stop now and start over' – which is what he did in the sixties and in some ways continues to do even now. So on the one hand one can have that purely instrumental relationship to the media, which consists of saying, 'We can do better, so let's.' Or one can say, 'Why should *I* accept the terms under which *you* define medium and the moment of mastery, or what it is *supposed* to be like?' I would characterise the remark of that young curator as deeply academic. By which I mean, someone who feels they have a list of criteria about how something is supposed to be.

**SW** That raises an interesting point regarding your critical relationship to academia, both as a set of actual institutions and as a theoretical enterprise.

**MR** I would have to start by saying that I have the same relationship to academia as to most other institutions, and remarking, with Brecht, why should we expect to be rewarded by the institutions that we despise and fight against? I would say that I was an unwilling recruit to academia. In some ways I was born to teach, but not necessarily to do so within the strictures of an academic institution, yet I have been within one or another of them since I was a student. As a student I was already a teacher in the mid-70s, and I have never left – and have been shocked to find myself still within an institution with various professorial positions. But it has never been comfortable nor without a great deal of turmoil – not generally on the part of my colleagues, but on the part of the administrative elements, who fear me for my refusal to pay them due deference and for the potentially political content of my work.

**SW** I imagine that the challenge you pose to the hierarchy in administrative terms is more manageable than the threat you embody in epistemological terms. That is where I would see your heterodoxy being least manageable for academic discipline, which would seek to discipline a practice that is flying in a different direction. All of which raises the question of your relationship to knowledge, which is highlighted by your library. You have the capacity to raise to a high level of abstraction the way you engage with your medium, with your work. Do you move toward the abstraction, or do you move away from the abstraction? We can think of the work as an instance, a proposition, and talk about the issues it raises. But at the same time you are an artist producing work in all its rich singularity.

**MR** Rather in all its *poor* singularity. By which I mean something specific that is not self-deprecating, which is a way of reminding people that I still want the work to be modest in its mode of production or address. Although one could say there is nothing modest about thousands of books, or thousands of items in a garage sale; they make no pretence to lock up a subject or a field.

**SW** There is nevertheless a strong cognitive dimension to your work, however ‘thin’ it may be. How do you use your library?

**MR** Well I don’t use it to make work. I use it to learn things, to be inspired, to follow trains of thought. It is true that it would not be unusual for me to be reading something and to ‘have an idea’ – but an idea about the same thing I was picking up the books for. That is, if I am interested in finding out about torture, it is because I am wondering how to communicate something about torture that is within my grasp. So I am looking for a kind of underpinning of knowledge to help me think about what I could produce, even when there is nothing visibly translated into the work. Being able to read rational, or poetic, discussions of things opens a pathway; seeing how words define, encircle or lay out a field I am interested in helps me to then insert myself and ‘make something’.

**SW** Your work never seems didactic, though it is sometimes misconstrued as such.

Upon closer scrutiny, or even just open-minded consideration, it's not easy to say what exactly the bottom line really is.

**MR** Not to seem mysterious at all, but rather to open up a certain gap in which the viewer makes the meaning. And I would even say that about the things that are totally obvious, like a montage that shows a wounded person from a familiar war, in a familiar domestic interior. Given the quantity and diversity of things that have been written about *Bringing the War Home* over the years, there is clearly a tremendous amount of space for the viewer to determine what it is about. And for me this is crucial. I never want to tell you an answer, just give you a... shrug. Because a shrug is in the same line as the question of heterodoxy because it says, 'I'm not here for long, and neither are you. There are a lot of us here, so let's make something of it. Better still, why don't *you* make something of it? You may *think* I have just made a definitive statement about something, but please, think again.'

**SW** So there is a kind of open invitation to emulation, and thus to recomposition and reinvention. Like on those rare occasions when one comes out of a film with the desire to make a film.

**MR** I've often said that a response I welcome is the equivalent of the quip that 'My child could paint that'. That is the most fantastic thing, because what I want people to think is, 'I could do that.' 'Yes you could, please do!' I'm not alone in that – it's the whole theory of cheap media and video not to appear as though the means of production were so rarefied as to be beyond you. I remember as a teenager having a conversation with the poet David Antin, whose hair had fallen out. In those days, one didn't go around without hair on one's head without an explanation. He said that when his hair had first started falling out, the doctors said, 'Ah, you have *alopecia partialis*.' What does that mean? It means partial baldness. And then when it all fell out, they said, 'Oh no, the diagnosis was wrong, it was *alopecia totalis*.' Of course the conversation was about linguistic frames. In order to make something seem as if there's knowledge there, you give it a name that's arcane. That stuck with me, because it is what I have always tried not to do. In my discursive writing, where I am trying to explain something, I try to be fairly clear; but generally in my work, I try not to be so clear that you close the book, so to speak, and say 'Gotcha', and walk out the door. Even in the antiwar montages, the agitprop works, I really want there to be an excess that is owned by the viewers. They have the space to stand within the work in order to create meaning and make meaning come alive – even if it's by deconstructing my work and rejecting it.

**SW** If we move from that idea into the space of the library, we find that it is a similar kind of conceptual space, where there is sufficient diversity that people can encounter that gap and pry it open.

**MR** The one thing about the library that I never anticipated was that people would see it as a portrait of *me*. That is the *least* interesting interpretation that could possibly exist. Why see it as a symbolic creation? Why not see it as a *library*, with books from diverse sources and pamphlets and other things? Because otherwise you have abstract-

ed it to the point where it's offering you nothing. So I am horrified by the library-as-portrait. So I agree with you to the extent that it literally never occurred to me that somebody could see it as anything else than what you just described, and that instead they went immediately to portraiture, which means that they didn't have to see it as an open invitation to anything, but only as ruins, like, 'If we decipher this, we'll have the story of Martha Rosler.' No, no, no, no, wrong! Look through THE artist, THIS artist, to the basis of practice of AN artist.

**SW** Let's talk about the library itself. A European looking through the shelves in the philosophy or social sciences section may well be surprised at the impact European philosophy and critical theory has had on you, and the relative under-representation of what – at least from a European perspective – appears to be dominant in American thinking. Where's Nelson Goodman? Richard Rorty and Arthur Danto?

**MR** Don't you think I'm the typical product of the 1970s in the United States, when we got the French pox? Coming of age in the 1960s, one realised very quickly that the most interesting answers, to all kinds of questions, from cuisine to critical theory, were not coming from the United States. The important exception was rock and roll and folk music, which came from the low tradition, which was very important to me, though I was also deeply involved in classical music – the European element. The German and French theory that was just being translated then opened up whole new worlds to us. At the time, we had blinkers on. We were locked down in the Cold War, and critical thinking was essentially taboo. And then we got these ideas from elsewhere that transformed everything. It is true that there are American philosophers of interest, but the American traditions, such as pragmatism, were not attractive because they didn't offer any space of resistance. They seemed, back then at least, to be bent toward accommodation. So once the tradition of open resistance of the Continental traditions appeared, it was a different story entirely. Eventually I discovered the new traditions of critical sociology that had emerged in America, beginning with C. Wright Mills in the 1950s, Christopher Lasch and Alvin Gouldner as well as people coming out of linguistics, like Noam Chomsky. As the decade advanced, the critical sociologists and even literary and art theorists got more into Marxism; they read Sartre, Heidegger and the Frankfurt School. But once you discover what they had read, and once the Frankfurt School was finally translated towards the end of the sixties, why not read Marcuse, Adorno, Horkheimer and Benjamin? In short, why read Susan Sontag when you can read Roland Barthes and Walter Benjamin – going straight to the source?

**SW** What about Hannah Arendt, who was both an émigrée and an immigrant and who injected the continental tradition in which she had been formed into the American intellectual life in which she was involved?

**MR** Because it was her hundredth anniversary in 2006, I spent six months reading her work, which led to some interesting discoveries for me. But there was a problem with Arendt in the 1960s, when she was alive and writing in the United States. She was against the student revolt, and she was against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which seemed incoherent at the time, though her thinking about this

question has now apparently led to Agamben's work on bare life, reopening the whole question of somebody who would claim that the concept of inherent human rights is an incoherent idea. I read *The Banality of Evil* shortly after it came out – and was riveted. It was her *Origins of Totalitarianism* that gave me the most trouble, along with *On Revolution*, criticising the student movement. So one read Hannah Arendt, but as opposed to Rosa Luxemburg, she was nowhere near as exciting, inspirational, or cogent. It was very hard to read somebody who was shaking her finger at student protestors for the ideas and tactics that she felt we were following.

**SW** Arendt was important for the key role she played in introducing the work of Walter Benjamin to English-speaking readers. Without her insightful and elegant introductory essay to his *Illuminations*, contextualising where this meteorite was coming from, his work might never have been known.

**MR** That's true. At first I was not interested in these people, but that essay persuaded me. My first entrée into the Frankfurt School was through Marcuse, whom I didn't appreciate until after reading Benjamin. I read *Eros and Civilisation* in the early 60s. At the same time, there was Henri Lefebvre, who was basically writing about another form of banality: the banality of everyday life, the prison of everyday life. What the Europeans brought that the Americans didn't have was a certain kind of hermeneutics. That is, the idea that there's a way to read a text beyond the pragmatics of reading, by reading it against itself, and by reading it for levels of signification that overwhelm even the denoted ones. These were not ideas that were popular in American philosophy at all. The way ordinary language philosophy had come to us was precisely the opposite: a kind of minimalism, whereby what you say is what you get, which is an instrumentalisation of language. What was so crucial in the 60s was the deinstrumentalisation of knowledge.

**SW** And the two vectors of that deinstrumentalisation were the Frankfurt School and Henri Lefebvre?

**MR** Right. Somebody stuffed a paperback copy of Lefebvre's *Everyday Life in the Modern World* into my hand in the early 70s, and it burnt a hole in my life. I *hated* it! And it was one of those paradigm shifts for me: Oh, this is awful, this is totally right! Here was a perspective that was not about the way in which institutions manipulate us through symbols, texts and political actions, but more about the way in which the lives we lead have certain forms of domination encoded in them. It seemed a subtler form of domination theory than the Frankfurt School variant; one in which unconscious processes were at work. One problem with the Frankfurt School's domination theory was the targets they chose, which, by and large, were the ones anybody would have chosen – principally the media. Lefebvre went way beyond that – after all, he was a surrealist.

**SW** But he was also a Marxist, as were, in their own fashion, the Frankfurt School theorists, which was their common denominator. I know you subsequently took part in David Harvey's seminar on reading *Das Kapital*. But when did you first read Marx?



**MR** Marx led me to them, in a sense, though they presented themselves at a similar time. It recently occurred to me, in looking at the current war, that what made me a radical was to understand what it meant to say that Vietnam was not an accident but, rather, policy. When this seemingly incomprehensible thought was presented to me and I understood that there were theories of history and political action, then everything changed. First I became a radical, then more or less a Marxist, but I followed the trajectory of much of the New Left, which was to start out with some notion of participatory democracy and then move to a more *theoretical* understanding of what was going on, rather than merely thinking we could wave our arms around, have meetings and everything would be okay. It was hard not to be a Hegelian Marxist, once the early manuscripts were published, given how they invoked agency and such notions as species being, which were completely alien to historical materialism. It seemed to point a way out of mechanistic dogma. *The Origins of Family, Property and the State* and some of Marx and Engels' other quasi-anthropological endeavours sat very well with feminism, because feminists were also asking about the origins of domination in *everyday life* – things that the classical Marxists had ceased to address.

**SW** The broad contours or cardinal points of the library are coming into focus. And of course feminism was a key component: what were the first feminist texts that made their way into the library?

**MR** *Notes from the First Year*, which was not a book at all, but a series of pamphlets that were subsequently collected under that title, followed by *Notes from the Second Year*. And a few collections and theoretical texts: *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, Shulamith Firestone, for example. The late 60s were a time of self-education and agitation via underground newspapers and pamphlets, many produced by women. And that is where my education ceased to be Continental and became American. Around 1967, women all over the country – New Left women – started writing position papers. I had already been discussing the oppression of women as an undergraduate: I had had a professor, a woman from Switzerland, who said that when women gave up their privileges there would be a revolution. Of course at the time I was mortified, because as a Jewish woman – where you're reminded every minute that you're inferior – I didn't feel privileged at all, but then I understood what she meant. Emancipation required removing oneself from the various strictures that bring a certain comfort.

**SW** In the sense that people are invariably complicit in their own oppression – however difficult it may be to hear that. From an earlier generation of feminists, what about the role of someone like Simone de Beauvoir?

**MR** If there was a single book, it was *The Second Sex*. It had galvanised the movement, which took on a life of its own. Women were writing articles and other women were reading them in newspapers like *Off Our Backs*, and self-printed pamphlets that cost 20 cents and were distributed in places like Groundworks Bookstore, a radical collective in San Diego.

**SW** It was a heady moment, where Black radicalism was also very powerful.

**MR** That was the first movement I became involved with, doing local leafleting for CORE as a high-school student. Many of us feminists and antiwar activists were schooled by our work in the civil rights struggle, which of course preceded all the antiwar, student and feminist protests. The civil rights movement changed everything in America.

**SW** It certainly changed the spectrum of visibility, shifting what Jacques Rancière calls the partition lines of the sensible. Voices that had been heard only as noise were suddenly heard as discourse. Of course literature also plays a role in allowing what was previously invisible, or barely visible, inaudible or scarcely audible, to come into focus. In that respect, the fiction and the poetry in your library is no less political.

**MR** My poet friends have made a point of saying, ‘There’s not a lot of poetry in your library!’ But poetry was important for me in an earlier period. I remember when as a fifteen-year-old somebody gave me a copy of Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl* – that copy is still in the library, actually – which, by opening the panorama of contemporary poetry and Beat literature, changed the world for me. In the 1960s, it seemed to me that everything in the United States was characterised by fear of Communists and waiting for the atom bomb – and I mean that quite viscerally. Our whole life was organised around terror and not thinking your way through anything. With the exception of the poets, who were American.

**SW** Looking through the fiction section, it seems fair to say that many of the formative texts come from mid-century modernism, with its focus on busting up literary convention.

**MR** Thomas Pynchon was very important to my development as a teenage reader, but so were *Catch-22* and *Mad Magazine*, and William Burroughs. I learned from Dostoyevsky and Thomas Mann the idea of interrogating one’s own text. First came Salinger, with his *Catcher in the Rye*, capturing inchoate adolescent dissidence, and then a bit later Gertrude Stein, particularly *The Making of Americans*, and Joyce, particularly *Ulysses*: here was someone who continuously manipulated style, rather than simply telling a story. But that foregrounding of style was something I first came across in the work of Joseph Conrad – language being presented as language, and in Herman Melville, the interruption or subversion of the novel through philosophy.

**SW** Conrad wrote a wonderfully enigmatic short story called ‘The Secret Sharer’, about a Doppelgänger, which is a concept not so far removed from your As-If.

**MR** That story interested me particularly because of its relationship to Golem, who was also a Doppelgänger. I had read a lot of science fiction when I was younger, and was delighted to find something in literary texts that I had initially encountered there: the malevolent shadow, the Poltergeist, the Doppelgänger, Frankenstein’s monster, the shadow of the unconscious. I had had to stop reading science fiction because the writing was so bad. Golem, aside from being a question about the location of evil, is about the temptation of becoming a demiurge – about the rabbi trying to do what God did, making a person from a lump of clay, a sort of Doppelgänger of himself, but which

cannot, of course, succeed. It raises the question of what the artist can actually do. Can the artist really make something that lives, or will their creations always fail to match the real? The question fascinates me, but I think Joyce's answer was that it was the wrong question.... in his development from *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to *Ulysses*, the former was a narrative, and in the latter, literature comes into its own, as illumination through the experimentation of language.

**SW** The library initially developed in an organic way, and ordered itself in keeping with the physical architecture of your house, which is why some of the books find themselves in improbable company. Somehow mirroring the way otherwise disparate ideas come together through chance encounters – conceptual clusters due to spatial contingencies.

**MR** It never sat in one room, but in many different rooms and corners of rooms, which raises a difficult organisational problem because there are multiple iterations of the same mode of organisation or random selections based on things I think I would like to be looking at. So as the library has moved from place to place I have tried to create an ensemble, because I don't want the library to be like a game of Old Maid, where you know you saw two things by the same author or on the same subject in two different places and you must bring them together. Otherwise you're giving up the human principle of organisation in favour of the randomised numerical principle.

**SW** Hence the almost quixotic quest to bring a satisfying order to the Library... These are heterodoxical questions par excellence. For a librarian, such questions are answered before they can be raised because there is an orthodox, pre-established ordering system, whereas you are rethinking the classification struggle. To use a gardening metaphor that, as a gardener, you will appreciate, there is something in your library that has gone to seed. And you are constantly pruning – and reintroducing a 'second nature'.

**MR** Especially because I am not good at organising things. There are too many obvious tangents. Like, do books about the exploration of the United States West go with books of pictures of Indians or do they go with books on the history of exploration, like navigating the globe? Of course, it is futile, because each day when I come back to my latest ordering, I say, 'Wait a minute.' My ordering is totally situational. When something won't fit on a given shelf and the section should actually wrap to the next shelf, I change the order. Even though I know that books are not periods at the end of a shelf...

**Juan de Nieves** Thank you very much, Martha. I would like to invite the rest of the speakers to come up to the table to begin the debate, as I think we will not have a lot of time to talk. We will do what we can. I think we should give the audience the chance to ask questions about the subject we are dealing with today. It might be interesting to allude to two matters first. One, concerning pedagogy as an attempt to standardise spaces, to seek consensus instead of disagreement. I think this would be a very interesting point concerning museums. After that, it might be possible to

discuss the matter of whether it is more complicated to carry out pedagogy in the museum setting, if it is more coherent to locate this from a public dimension, from a public area.

**Audience** Good afternoon. I feel a slight need to refer to previous contributions. I would like to stress the dimension of experience that is favoured by educational departments. In other words, our audience is to a large extent a captive audience which comes to us perforce, and a large proportion of them come from the educational background. Then, we have the following fundamental difficulty: creating a language. At times, the institutional reality of our experience is tremendously basic. At times we judge with a large degree of visual illiteracy. This is the sociological reality. Another terrain is that of the official discourse between museum institutions. In other words, within the museum institution, there are resistances, and one of these resistances is us in the educational department. I believe that the educational departments are subordinated to the museum institution. To a large degree we have to carry out a titanic task to justify and not banalise daily dealings with the common citizen from the institutional point of view. The common citizen is not an opinion creator. Opinion creation is carried out, by the critic, the artist, and the communications media. Then, we are completely helpless. Because it is impossible to compete with certain levels of power. Notice how there are very basic protocols that establish that educational departments must participate in the process of conceptualisation of any exhibitional narrative. I would like... please, raise your hand, those here who direct museums and accept this participation. They do not exist. I speak from experience. If I had a magic wand, I would ask all museum directors to adopt a sincere commitment from now on to make a genuine attempt to co-operate with educational departments, who are their spokespeople to society, those who deal with it continually, and we see that most of society does not know how to read visually. This is something that needs to be built. I would be delighted, in view of the sepulchral silence that my question received in another session, for this to be addressed. In summary, I would be delighted if ADACE were to carry out a public and social commitment in which education received a star role.

Lastly, to go back to the presentation by Antoni Muntadas, and his idea that work should speak for itself, I would say, with my apologies, that it is a great lie. The work speaks for itself when one has minimal cultural references to enable it to speak.

**Juan de Nieves** Thank you for your intervention. I would like to ask you to be more concrete, because otherwise we will not have enough time to reply. Ute wishes to make a comment.

**Ute Meta Bauer** I agree with you. I believe museums are also accessible public spaces and should be as accessible as education in general. But from my own point of view, I must say that I have learned from what I have not understood, and now, confronting students in America, at times I see that they want to know why they need to read a text and what the crucial point of it is. I have an enormous resistance to this. I saw, for example, on German public television, which I believe is similar to Spanish television, once, when I was fourteen years old... we didn't have a television until I was twelve... I saw a film by Fassbinder which completely irritated me. Later on,

at the age of 14, I sneaked into a cinema and saw *Il Decamerón* and *Salò* by Pasolini, and it also bothered me, but it also shocked me in a certain unexpected way. When I was 12 I went to a museum for the first time with my school and saw some paintings by Picasso which completely irritated me, and it was this irritation, that lack of understanding, of confrontation with something that in some way bothered me but at the same time fascinated me to a certain degree, that is the reason I am here today. I do not come from a family with artistic training, and the same applies for television, the media, etc. So I would trust normal, ordinary people, because I too am a normal, ordinary person. I would trust their skills in understanding, and what I do oppose firmly is transforming communications into mainstream speech. I agree with you. I believe that museum directors and people with that authority should basically search for ways to collaborate with artists, with people involved in their exhibitions, to debate how these can be communicated. However, I do not believe in those separate entities and experiments that believe there is a museum pedagogy with a completely different idea from that held by the artists, and that there is also a museum administration that has a completely different view on the work. I think we have to start a dialogue, not on how to communicate the exhibition, but about how we communicate with the public as a whole.

**Martha Rosler** Also coming from the American context, it happens that I am a member of the Educational Committee of the Whitney Museum and a member of the Advisory Committee of the Educational Department of the Museum of Modern Art of New York. There, in the United States, the museum is perceived, above all, as an educational institution, as a perfect instrument for integration. This is due to the show-business culture, which has two consequences. One is the mega-exhibition which attracts enormous crowds of people. And the other is to keep visitors happy with explanatory texts in which people feel themselves within the experience by means of audio-guides and other things – you know, the museology typical of museum studies, in which there is a Dutch still-life of the sixteenth century and next to it a showcase with a jug. So there exists this type of literalisation and banalisation of the meaning that Ute alluded to precisely. There are no moments for encounter, if I can put it that way, a genuine encounter with a work of art. However, in the Whitney, there were seminars with the artists with quite good audiences and an educational function for the artistic community, but these were cancelled because they became a forum for camouflaged collectors. And, in fact, the same was the case of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Los Angeles, its project-room as well as a series of projects called Public Sales Offering (PSO), which is a term that has to do with buying shares in companies that have just come onto stock market, and which is the same concept debated a few days ago, the fact that anyone by buying shares and the rest, is a member, and in a certain way, has a right to purchase a small portion of knowledge within the museum. So, I would tell you to be careful about what you want in relation to the gentle integration of the educational department within the flow of the large machinery of meaning that museums are supposed to be. I am really talking seriously here, and I see it from within these two cases. However, I also need to say that the educational department of the Museum of Modern Art seems to be responsible for the arrival of a great symposium, by New York standards, on feminism, which in the world of art is a subject that has been left aside and which returns to this space thanks to the educational

department, which is sponsoring a series of real debates with artists and researchers. Thus, the problem with the United States is of course its pragmatic philosophy, which is that everything, in essence, must be pre-digested and pre-translated for the encounter with art to be something that does not bother you, you know? And I had the same experience as you did, Ute, I come from a family of art lovers, but they had no idea of what art really was. When I was 14, I went to MoMA and was completely stunned by things I had never seen before, and also by a film.

Lastly, and I will finish with this, in the Whitney Biennial there was a small fold-out colouring book for small children wanting to go to the Biennial. The main subject of the Biennial was decadence, so placing their little rabbits and other similar things was a true challenge. I completely respect the people who direct the educational department there, but there is a certain logic in translation and integration that is quite mortifying.

**John Beverley** Martha Rosler is creating a work of art with these events she constructs yet at the same time reflects on art shows and artistic learning. She has insisted that this is a sort of pedagogy. I was interested in this idea, to go back to Schérer and pedagogic critique... the recovery of the poetic force of youth, childhood, an aesthetic learning rather than an art learning, because pedagogy in itself is aesthetic, or rather an aesthetic way of doing things.

**Ute Meta Bauer** I completely agree with you. The very hard thing to communicate is that you perceive the shell, the museum as a shell, but you don't see what materials are inside it, and quite frequently what is in books, films that have been there, the different films that are exhibited for the community, making them accessible for people instead of waiting for people to come to you... also serving as a bridge. I think that this type of bridge, as the Americans would say, is pretty critical, because there already is a frontier between institutions that house this knowledge which at times make it much easier to exit than to enter them.

I believe that France is a very interesting example: there they have artists working in schools. Yesterday I spoke to Benjamin Buchloh and he told me there was a fabulous project by Michael Asher, an American artist who worked for three years in the educational department of the LACMA. Benjamin Buchloh explained that Michael Asher discovered that in the metropolitan community of Los Angeles people spoke a total of 98 languages, and asked the educational department: *'How do you address these people, in what language?'* So, they started translating everything into the 98 languages. The following step was Michael Asher with children remounting the exposition. And suddenly, the curators rebelled, they did not want to accept that, and then came the administrators of the museum saying people couldn't touch the paintings and so on. I think that if we take education in the museum seriously, we need to break down some barriers between the public and the museum director and the educational services.

**Audience** This is not a question; it is more an answer and clarification. I think that Martha's criticisms of educational practices in museums are correct, yet the greatest challenge is that we cannot consider the museum beyond education. All that Ute has said on the importance of being together is true, but on the other hand over these

few days we have heard historians, critics, directors and curators but no educator. I think it is always important to elaborate and affirm the presence of education in museums, because that is where it has to be. I don't know what the future will be like for art, but for museums there will be no future without education.

**Juan de Nieves** You are quite right, we have not had a museum educator at the table, but we have had a relevant philosopher of pedagogy who has talked about matters such as the limits of education, although not necessarily from a museum viewpoint. I am sorry, but because of timing problems, we have to stop here.



## presentation

*20,000 hours reward* is the title of a 1974 interview given to Imeline Lufbery by Marcel Broodthaers in which the Belgian artist criticised the fact that art was imprisoned by its own ghosts, used to embellish spaces of institutions as a sign of power, and wandered like a shadow through the layers of history. Broodthaers clearly distanced himself from the modernist belief that museums, as repositories of artistic essence, had to expose a universal reality which should be able to transform society. More than thirty years later, the questions and doubts posed by Broodthaers regarding the role of modern museums continue to be valid and most of them remain unresolved.

With the aim of discussing the role of museums in today's society and proposing organisational models, the Spanish Association of Contemporary Art Directors – ADACE – which was established as a forum for reflection and debate on the role and function of museums and contemporary art centres in Spain – has proposed the setting-up of an international seminar which is intended to be held every other year.

At the seminar, Spanish museum directors and curators will be reviewing the current situation of the subject with other international colleagues, thinkers and artists.

## participants

**Manuel Asensi**, Professor of Theory of Literature, University of Valencia.

**Mieke Bal**, Academy Professor of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Professor of Theory of Literature, University of Amsterdam.

**John Beverley**, Professor of Literature and Cultural Studies, Pittsburg University.

**Manuel J. Borja-Villel**, Director of the Museu d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona.

**Benjamin Buchloh**, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Art History, Harvard University.

**Gustavo Buntinx**, Director of the San Marcos Cultural Centre, Lima.

**Jean-François Chevrier**, Professor of the Higher National School of Fine Arts, Paris.

**Nuria Enguita Mayo**, Project Director of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona.

**Javier González de Durana**, Director of the Artium Vitoria-Gasteiz Museum.

**Beatriz Herráez**, Historian and art critic, Madrid.

**Paulo Herkenhoff**, Art critic, Rio de Janeiro.

**Martin Jay**, Professor of History, University of California, Berkeley.

**Ana Longoni**, Professor of the University of Buenos Aires and Researcher (CONICET).

**Ute Meta Bauer**, Associated Professor and Director of the Visual Arts Program, MIT, Cambridge, USA.

**Simón Marchán**, Professor of Aesthetics and Art Theory, Department of Philosophy, Spanish Open University.

**Antoni Muntadas**, Artist.

**Juan de Nieves**, Artistic Director of the Espai d'Art Contemporani, Castelló.

**Suey Rolnik**, Coordinator of the Postgraduate Studies on the Contemporary Subjectivity, Catholic University of São Paulo.

**Yolanda Romero**, Director of the Centro José Guerrero, Granada.

**Martha Rosler**, Artist.

**René Schöten**, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the Paris-VIII Saint Denis University.

**Ailan Sekula**, Artist.

**Teresa Velázquez**, Programme Director of Matadero Madrid Centre for Contemporary Art.

**Santos Zúñiga**, Professor of Audiovisual Communication and Publicity of the Department of Social Sciences and Communication, University of the Basque Country.

## programme

## Friday, 15 December 2006

- 17:30 h  
Opening
- 18:30 h  
Programme presentation: **Manuel Borja-Villel** and **Yolanda Romero**
- 19:00 h  
Opening lecture: **Benjamin Buchloh**

## Saturday, 16 December 2006

- 10:00 h  
**THE MUSEUM AS A SPACE OF REGENERATION**  
Looking beyond Huntington's clash of civilisations, it is highly likely that we find ourselves at the end of an era and that its outcome may well be conflict on a world scale. Recent political events, fundamentalisms of every type and this kind of self-imposed authoritarianism towards which Western democratic models seem to be degenerating, would suggest such a scenario. It may be appropriate to remember that, as occurred in the time of neo-nazi Europe, in this context art and museums acquire a leading role in the regeneration and re-establishment of new spaces of sociability. How do we see the 21st-century museum? What new forms of sociability and education can we create? How can we rethink the museum as a space of social regeneration?

Discussion table: **Benjamin Buchloh**, **Simón Marchán**, **Santos Zúñiga**  
Moderator: **Manuel J. Borja-Villel**

- 17:00 h  
**BETWEEN THE ARTISTIC FACT AND THE DOCUMENT: THE TRANSLATION**  
The nature brought about by the change in artistic paradigm that took place in the sixties and seventies onwards also entailed a rethinking of mediation spaces. These could no longer be considered in terms of either white cube (modern art museum) or black box (cinema). Theatricality involves an opening up of relational space, a wide, agonizing space. It also requires space for performance. In the same way as text in the theatre is in fact a kind of pre-text that only makes sense when the work is "performed", perhaps we should be thinking about exhibition devices in which this "updating" of artwork is also made possible.

Lecture: **Martin Jay**  
Discussion table: **Suey Rolnik**, **Jean-François Chevrier**, **Antoni Muntadas**  
Moderator: **Nuria Enguita Mayo**

## Sunday, 17 December 2006

- 10:00 h  
**WHAT HISTORY ARE WE TELLING? HOW ARE NARRATIONS BUILT?**  
All works of art are of course complex, and any display practice, any exhibition, is never entirely consumed at the very moment it appears. The classical history of art, which attempted to situate artwork in its original setting, makes no sense in this context. In the case of exhibitions, the figure of the narrator becomes obvious in their very structure. How do we narrate? How are narrations built? What role is played by the curator and his or her relationship with the reality of art? These are just a few of the questions we have to ask ourselves regarding what histories we are telling.

Lecture: **Mieke Bal**  
 Discussion table: **Alan Sekula, Beatriz Hernandez**  
 Moderation: **Javier González de Durana**

17:00 h

#### THE SUB-ALTERNATIVE VOICE: LATIN AMERICA

In a world where the predominant discourse is one of multiculturalism, and cultural policy is that which is politically correct, we are inclined to imagine an artistic construction in which "the other" can talk to us, when in fact this is not the case and, in the end, the real tendency is for us to nullify any kind of difference or discord. The need to understand the sub-alternative is essential if we want to prevent the art institution from becoming a kind of republic of arts, and the artists our national patriarchs.

Lecture: **John Beverley**  
 Discussion table: **Paula Merkenhoff, Ana Langoni, Gustavo Buntinx**  
 Moderation: **Terresa Velázquez**

Monday, 18 December 2006

10:00 h

#### TOWARDS A DISTORTED EDUCATION

Education is still largely ignored as a valid element in the attainment of freedom. Most of today's education programmes continue to provide regurgitating real access to knowledge. We cannot fail to recognise that with the best of intentions the museum as an institution goes to great lengths and employs considerable resources to "take art to its public" in an attempt to display the treasures accumulated in its collections. These reformist measures have achieved nothing more than the perpetuation of some of the fallacies in which modern education systems have been established, such as transparency, progress, and education as mere transmission and access. How can a museum explore history, the memoryless of which it is the guardian? In short, how can history be written and explained? The subject of education is obviously inseparable from that of narration. No alternative education policy can be put into practice unless the history(s) being told are also alternative.

Lecture: **Reed Schärer**  
 Discussion table: **Manuel Arenal, Ole Meta Bauer, Martha Rosler**  
 Moderation: **Juan de Nieves**

#### VENUE

Universidad Internacional de Andalucía  
 Sede Antonio Machado de Baeza  
 Palacio de Jalsajuntos. Plaza de Santa Cruz s/n. Baeza, Jaén

#### REGISTRATION

The seminar is aimed at doctorate students, curators, historians, art critics and people with an interest in contemporary cultural practice. To register applicants must fill in the enclosed registration form and submit it to the UINRA Rector's Office with a photocopy of their identity card or passport, their curriculum vitae, and a brief letter describing the reasons why they wish to participate, by no later than 2 pm on November 30, 2006.

#### ADMISSION

The selected candidates will receive notification. They will be required to pay a 130 euro registration fee via bank transfer into UINRA's account number 2098.0445.58.0502000075 (at Museo Caja de Huelva y Sevilla, Isla de la Cartuja office). The costs generated by bank operations shall be entirely assumed by the applicants. The registration fee includes meals - midday meal and dinner - during the days of the seminar.

#### CERTIFICATIONS AND DIPLOMAS

An attendance diploma will be issued to participants who attend 80% of the seminar's activities.

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 W [www.uina.es/hiperprograma.htm](http://www.uina.es/hiperprograma.htm)

registration form



10,000 francs reward  
 (The Contemporary Art Museum, dead or alive)

Office Antonio Machado s/n. Baeza  
 23.10.17.18 December 06

fig. 48 Programme of the Encounter 10,000 francs reward (*The Contemporary Art Museum, dead or alive*) held in the Antonio Machado site of the International University of Andalusia in Baeza, from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2006.

information



## PROFILES



### Manuel Asensi

Professor of Literary Theory of the University of Valencia and guest professor of various universities of the United States. He is the author of a large number of theoretical works such as *Teoría de la lectura: para una crítica paradójica* (1987), the edition of *Teoría literaria y reconstrucción* (1990), *La teoría fragmentaria del círculo de Iena: Friedrich Shlegel* (1991), *Espectropoética: Derrida, lector de Marx* (1994), *Literatura y filosofía* (1995), *La maleta de Cervantes o el olvido del autor* (1996) and *Historia de la teoría de la literatura II: El siglo XX hasta los años setenta* (2003). He has also been translator of Paul de Man and Andrezej Warminski.

### Mieke Bal

Mieke Bal is a member of the Dutch Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences. Professor of Literary Theory in the University of Amsterdam and founding director of the School for Cultural Analysis. Her work in the history of feminist art and cultural studies offers a solid alternative to dominant thinking in these areas. Among her works are *Looking In: The Art of Viewing* (2001), a statement of perception theory as a continuous confrontation between cultural modes that determine the visual subject and *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (1986), in which she reflects on the construction of the museum discourse of authority. She has just published *Mieke Bal Reader* (2006), an anthology that collects her most outstanding works on literary studies, visual culture and interdisciplinary methodology.

### John Beverley

Lecturer in the Department of Spanish and Latin American Literature, the Centre of Latin American Studies and the Programmes for Cultural and Film Studies of the University of Pittsburgh, United States. He specialises in subaltern and post-colonial studies and is the author of renowned articles and books on the subject among which we mention his works *Literature and Politics in the Central American Revolutions* (1990), *Against Literature* (1993), *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America* (1995), *La voz del otro: Testimonio, subalternidad y verdad narrativa* (1992), *Subalternity and Representation. Arguments in Cultural Theory* (1999), *The Impossibility of Politics: Subalternity, Modernity, Hegemony* (2001) and *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth* (2004).

**Manuel Borja-Villel**

Director of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (MNCARS). He was director of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) between 1998 and 2008 as well as the Fundació Antoni Tàpies of Barcelona between 1990 and 1998. From both institutions he has re-thought canonical museum structures and carried out antagonistic and cross narrations opposed to modernistic orthodoxy. He is a Doctor in History of Art at the City University of New York and the author of numerous publications, besides being the curator of exhibitions of artists such as James Coleman, Marcel Broodthaers, Lygia Clark, Antoni Tàpies y Hans Haacke, among others. He has carried out projects such as *Los límites del museo* (1995), *La ciutat de la gent* (1996), *Antagonismos* (2001), which suggest a reflection on the public area of the museum far removed from the construction of the public as a consumer. Today he is president of the CIMAM (International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art, linked to the ICOM) and has been part of the Advisory Committee of Documenta 12 in Kassel. He is a member of ADACE.

**Benjamin H. D. Buchloh**

Historian, editor and art critic, he has carried out a prolific and pivotal activity in various areas and geographies. He is co-publisher of the publications *Interfunktionen* in Germany and *October* in the United States. Benjamin Buchloh can be considered one of the most authorised people on the subject of changing relations between Avant-garde historic movements and neo-avantgarde movements within the European and North American contexts as of the end of World War II. The possibilities of art and critique in a social, political and economical context altered after the historic trauma have been the object of a set of essays titled *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry* (2003), whereas the reflection on historiographic categories considered to be opposed to this is the axis of *Formalismo e Historicidad: Modelos y Métodos en el Arte del siglo XX* (2004). Currently he is professor of History of Art in Harvard University. After the recent edition with Rosalind Krauss, Yve Alain Boys and Hal Foster of *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (2005), he is currently preparing a monographic study on German artist Gerhard Richter.



### Gustavo Buntinx

Historian and art critic. He has taught in the Universities of Buenos Aires, Mexico and São Paulo, and has directed the Museum of Italian Art, the Museum of San Marcos and the Cultural Centre of San Marcos in Lima from 2001 to 2008. His research has re-interpreted the dialectics of centre-fringe and concepts of otherness and difference in the context of contemporary Latin America. He has been curator for the following exhibitions among others: *Mallki: La exhumación simbólica del arte peruano* (1980-2000); *Carne viva: Partes de guerra* (1980-2003); *País del mañana: Utopía y ruina en la guerra civil peruana* (1980-2000) and *Revelaciones: Poéticas apocalípticas a finales del milenio* (2005). For the past twenty years he has directed MICROMUSEO, an alternative museum project. He is the founding member of several civic and academic entities such as Colectivo Sociedad Civil.

### Jean-François Chevrier

Historian and art critic as well as curator. He teaches at the École Normale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, Paris. In different essays, Chevrier has examined the place of photography, and by extension, modern and contemporary art in current society. Among the exhibitions and catalogues he has collaborated in as co-curator and co-editor are *Matter of Facts* (Nantes, 1988), *Une autre objectivité / Another Objectivity* (London, 1988), *Photo Kunst* (Stuttgart, 1989), *Craigie Horsfield* (London, 1989), *Lieux communs, figures singulières* (Paris, 1991), *Walker Evans & Dan Graham* (Rotterdam, 1992), *Documenta X. The Book* (1997) (with Catherine David) or *Art i utopia. L'acció restringida* (2005) (with Manuel Borja-Villel), which is based on the title of an essay by Mallarmé and in which twentieth century art is re-interpreted going from Cubism and the historic Avant-garde movements up to the end of the seventies, questioning the very idea of modernity.

### Nuria Enguita Mayo

She has a degree in History and Art Theory by the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. From 1991 to 1998 she worked in the IVAM as curator and there commissioned exhibitions dedicated to Cildo Meireles, José Antonio Orts and Juan Downey, among others. Her association with the Fundació Antoni Tàpies started in 1996 with a collaboration as co-curator of the exhibition on Lygia Clark. In 1998 she carried out a series of films and videos on the sixties and seventies for the

Museo Serralves. Since June 1998 she is Head of Projects of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, where she has organised exhibitions of works by Chris Marker, Renée Green, Eulàlia Vallodera, Victor Burgin, Asger Jorn, Jon Mikel Euba and Steve McQueen, among others, besides seminars and film and video seasons. She has also participated in projects such as *Culturas de Archivo* (co-directed with Jorge Blasco) or *Representaciones árabes contemporáneas* (directed by Catherine David). She was part of the group of commissioners that organised the Manifesta 4 (Frankfurt, 2002). She is a member of the management team of artandthinking of the Universidad Internacional de Andalucía. She is a member of ADACE.

### **Javier González de Durana**

Director of Tenerife Espacio de las Artes-TEA. He has been director of Artium in Álava. Centro Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporáneo (Vitoria-Gasteiz) ever since its opening in 2002 up to 2008 and previously, Sala Rekalde in Bilbao between 1991 and 2001. He has been a lecturer of Contemporary History in the University of the Basque Country since 1986. Among others, he has been curator of the exhibitions: *La torre herida por el rayo* (2000), *Gótico, pero exótico* (2002), *Agrupémonos todos* (2003), *Laocoonte devorado. Arte y violencia política* (2004), *Mensajes cruzados* (2005) and *La obra maestra desconocida* (2006). He is secretary of ADACE.

### **Paulo Herkenhoff**

Historian, art critic and independent curator. He has been the director of the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro and the Museum of Beaux Arts of the same city, is associated curator of the Department of Latin American Art of the MoMA of New York and director of the twenty-fourth edition of the Biennial of São Paulo (1998), dedicated to antropophagia as an appropriation strategy. He is the author of numerous essays such as: *Jose Oiticica Filho* (1993), *The Contemporary Art of Brazil: Theoretical Constructs* (1993), *The Theme of Crisis in Contemporary Latin American Art* (1993), *Cildo Meireles* (2000), *Beatriz Milhazes* (2001) and *Adriana Varejao* (2002). His most recent curator projects, that stand out both because of the pedagogic interest they reveal as well as a historical revision have been: *The trajectory of light in Brazilian art* (2001), *Lucio Fontana* (2001), *Tempo* (2002), *Guillermo Kuitca* (2003) and *Manobras Radicais* (2006).

### Beatriz Herráez

Historian and art critic. She is an adviser in the department of exhibitions and cultural action of the Centro Cultural Montehermoso Kulturunea (Vitoria-Gasteiz), and co-director of the seminars on Image of the Comunidad de Madrid. She also is a habitual collaborator in different specialised publications such as *Exit Express*, *Exit BOOK* (Madrid) or *Mugalari* (Basque country). Among her recent exhibitions are: *Rendez-vous nowhere* (Montehermoso Kulturunea, 2008), *Soy el final de la reproducción* (Castillo/corrales, Paris, 2007, and Sculpture Center, NYC, 2008), *El segundo nombre de las cosas* (MUSAC, León, 2007) and *Tell me the truth* (Sala Rekalde, Bilbao, 2006).

### Martin Jay

Cultural critic and History lecturer in California University, Berkeley. He has carried out research along three axes: critical theory (in which he has carried out diverse considerations on the Frankfurt School and post-structuralism [such as *Force Fields*, 2003]), European intellectual history (such as his studies on Western marxism and the German intellectual diaspora to the United States [*Dialectic Imagination*, 1988, and *Adorno*, 1988]) as well as visual culture studies (of which we mention his analysis of the predominance of visuality in modernity and the anti-visual impulse of contemporary thinking [*Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, 1994]). He has just published a work titled *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (2006), an essay on conceptions of experience in different philosophic traditions.

### Ana Longoni

Lecturer at the University of Buenos Aires, she teaches Media Theory and Culture and heads the research group of Plastic Arts and left-wing movements in Argentina during the 20th century. Her work represents an effort to reinterpret Argentinian avant-garde artistic creations through the politics of revolutionary left wing movements. She has published the following books as a collaborator: *De los poetas malditos al video-clip* (1998), *Del Di Tella a Tucumán Arde* (2000), the preliminary study of the book by Oscar Masotta *Revolución en el arte* (2004) and one of the chapters of the anthology edited by I. Katzenstein *Listen, Here, Now! Argentine Art of the sixties: Writings of the Avant-Garde* (2004). She was a core member of the founding group of the CeDInCI (Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas en Argentina).

**Simón Marchán Fiz**

Professor of Aesthetics and Art Theory in the Faculty of Philosophy of the UNED university. He has written some of the most relevant works on aesthetics, art and architecture published in Spain. Out of his more relevant publications we mention: *Del arte objetual al arte de concepto* (1972-1974), the collection *La estética en la cultura moderna. De la Ilustración a la crisis del estructuralismo* (1982), *Contaminaciones figurativas: Imágenes de la arquitectura y de la ciudad como figuras de lo moderno* (1987) or his essay *La historia del Cubo: Minimal Art y fenomenología* (1994). He has participated in the publication of *España: vanguardia artística y realidad social* (1976), *Escritos de arte de vanguardia* (1979) and *El descrédito de las vanguardias artísticas* (1980), among many other works.

**Ute Meta Bauer**

Freelance Curator, Director of the Visual Arts Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge), Professor of Theory, Practice and Transfer of Contemporary Art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and the Founding Director of the Norwegian Office For Contemporary Art Norway. She has been working as curator for exhibitions and presentations on contemporary art, film, video with a focus on transdisciplinary formats. From 2003-2004, Bauer was Artistic Director of the *3rd Berlin biennial for contemporary art*. She co-curated *Documenta11* (2002). In 2001 she made exhibitions such as *First Story - Women Building/New Narratives for the 21st Century* for the European Cultural Capital Porto 2001 and she curated *Architectures of Discourse* for the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona.

**Antoni Muntadas**

Artist. The feature of his work is to examine the processes of information and communication in real environments as shown in *Cadaqués Canal Local* (1974-1976), the first communitarian television experience in Spain. Ever since then and half-way between Europe and the United States, he has worked on institutional critique, exploring signifier strategies of power in public and institutional spaces and mass media with projects such as *The File Room* (from 1994 onwards), an archive on international censorship, *On Translation* (from 1995 onwards), which is a project that explores social and political processes involved in translation, and interpretation,

or *Between The Frames* (1983-1991), a contextual analysis of the agents and mechanisms in the field of art. He has exhibited in the Kassel Documenta, the Venice Biennale, São Paulo, the Whitney Museum, Lyon and Havana as well as in museums such as MoMA, Witte de With, MNCARS or MACBA, among many others. He is currently a guest professor in the Programme of Visual Arts in the School of Architecture in the MIT, in Cambridge (MA).

### Juan de Nieves

He has a degree in History of Modern and Contemporary Art from the University of Santiago de Compostela in 1987. Curator of the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea between 1994 and 1998. Exhibition technician in the Consorcio de Museos de la Comunidad Valenciana between 1998 and 1999. Exhibition Chief of the Espai d'art contemporani de Castelló between 1999 and 2004, as well as director of this institution between 2004 and 2008. He has been commissioner of different exhibitions among which we point out *Daniel Buren. Les Cabanyes de cerámica i espill* (2006), *Contemporane@ 05. Interferencias en la ciudad y sus paisajes asociados* (2005), *Laughing Allowed* (2004), *Contemporane@ 02. Plataforma de proyectos* (2002), *Isaac Pérez Vicente: la luz en la sombra* (1996), *Incidentes* (1995), *Sida. Pronunciamento y acción* (1994) or *O proceso abstracto. Artistas galegos, 1950-1979* (1993). He is a member of ADACE.

### Suely Rolnik

Psychoanalyst, author of essays and lecturer of Clinical Psychology in the Catholic University of São Paulo where she is co-ordinator of Postgraduate Studies in Contemporary Subjectivity. She has translated part of the works of Gilles Deleuze to Portuguese and has published, along with Felix Guattari, *Micropolítica. Cartografias do desejo* (1986). She is a specialist in the work of artist Lygia Clark, whose last work, *Structuring the Self*, was the theme of her thesis and research project *Nós somos o molde. A vocês cabe o sopro. Lygia Clark, da obra ao acontecimento*, object of an exhibition she co-commissioned in France (2005). She has participated as a speaker in outstanding exhibitions: Documenta X, InSite in San Diego, Biennial of São Paulo, museums such as the MACBA or the MOCCA and universities such as Yale, Columbia or Lovaine. She is a regular contributor to magazines such as *Multitudes*, *Traffic*, *Chimères*, *Parkett* and *Trópico*.

**Yolanda Romero Gómez**

Director of the Centro José Guerrero, Granada, since 2000. She has directed the exhibition halls of the Palacio de Condes de Gabia belonging to the Provincial Government in Granada between 1989 and 1999, as well as the Contemporary Art Collection of this institution. She has been curator of numerous exhibitions of various authors such as Richard Avedon, Francesc Torres, Judith Barry, Pablo Palazuelo, Antoni Muntadas, Helen Lewitt, Soledad Sevilla, José Guerrero, Narelle Jubelin or Richard Misrach, among others. She is a member of the contents team of the project *artandthinking* of the Universidad Internacional de Andalucía. She is president of ADACE.

**Martha Rosler**

Artist and essay author. In both facets she has carried out research along two axes: on one hand daily living and the geopolitics of public spaces, analysing the experience in the (no)places of modern urbanism (such as in her works *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*, 1974-1975 or *In the Place of the Public: Airport Series*, 1997), and on the other hand performative representation of feminine identity (as in *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, 1974-1975 and in *Body Beautiful, or Beauty Knows No Pain*, 1966-1972). Her essays, which are published in *Artforum*, *October*, *Grey Room* or *Quaderns*, have been collated in *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Essays 1975-2001* (MIT Press, 2004). She has recently exhibited in the New Museum of Contemporary Art, the Internacional Center of Photography, the Dia Art Foundation, the Sprengel Art Museum and the MACBA. She teaches in Rutgers University.

**René Schérer**

Professor emeritus of Philosophy of the Université Paris VIII, Saint Denis. He is a member of a generation of thinkers such as Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida or Michel Foucault. Schérer has stood out because of his studies on radical pedagogy that analyse certain taboos of our society such as the repressive relationship between teachers and alumni. Among his publications we mention *Zeus hospitalier: éloge de l'hospitalité: essai philosophique* (1993), *Regards sur Deleuze* (1998), *Enfantines* (2002) or *Emile perversi: Ou des rapports entre l'éducation et la sexualité* (2006).

### Allan Sekula

Artist and essay author. As an artist his outstanding feature is his examination of the critical and narrative capacity of photographic documentaries, which he treats with distance and intertextuality typical of conceptual art. He explores in different series the locations of tension and conflict in non-material capitalism such as in *Fish Story* (1989-1995), genealogy of the representation of sea economy, *Waiting for the Tear Gas* (1999), a series on manifestations of anti-globalisation and his more recent work: *Black tide*, on the environmental catastrophe caused by the sinking of the Prestige oil tanker on Galician coasts. As an essay author he has written a study proposal of the photographic file qualities of *The traffic in photographs* (1981), *On the invention of photographic meaning* (1984), *El cuerpo y el archivo* (1989) and *Entre el Mar y el Diablo Azul: Consideraciones del Tráfico en la Fotografía* (2001).

### Teresa Velázquez

Exhibition chief of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Director of contents of the Centro Matadero in Madrid between 2006 and 2008, she was previously director of Museo Patio Herreriano de Arte Contemporáneo Español of Valladolid between 2004 and 2006. She was art consultant of the City Hall of Madrid. She has co-ordinated the Network of Co-operation Centres for Culture of Spain abroad and directed the Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima from 1997 to 2002. She previously worked as project director of Ingenia S.A. Producciones Culturales and as co-ordinator of the programme called Programa Arte en los Espacios Públicos in the Expo'92 of Seville. She is a member of ADACE.

### Santos Zunzunegui

Professor of Audiovisual Communications and Advertising in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Communications of the Basque University. He is author of studies on very diverse subjects and methodologies. Within the history of films, noteworthy works are *El cine en el País Vasco* (1984), *Historias de España: de qué hablamos cuando hablamos de cine español* (2002) or *Los felices sesenta: aventuras y desventuras del cine español (1959-1971)* (2005). Within the field of sociology and image semiotics, he has published *La mirada cercana: microanálisis filmico* (1994), *Mirar la imagen* (1985), *Pensar la imagen* (1989) and *Paisajes de la forma* (1994). And, as far as museum spaces are concerned, we mention *Metamorfosis de la mirada: Museos y Semiótica* (1990).





*10,000 francs reward (The Contemporary Art Museum, dead or alive)* is the publication of the proceedings of the event of the same name, run by the Association of Contemporary Art Directors of Spain – ADACE – and organised by the Ministry of Culture, the State Corporation for Spanish Cultural Action Abroad – SEACEX and the International University of Andalusia – UNIA artandthinking.

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